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**THE VIETNAM SYNDROME
AND THE CONFLICT IN FORMER YUGOSLAVIA**

by

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THE VIETNAM SYNDROME AND THE CONFLICT IN FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

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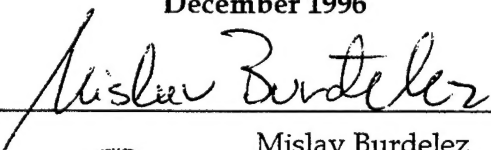
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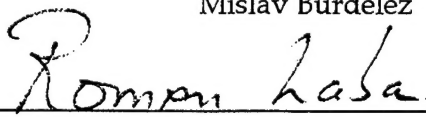
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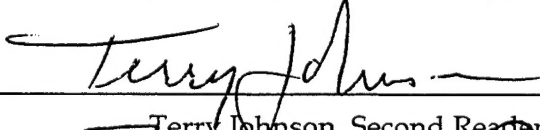
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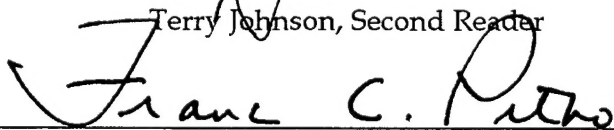
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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates to what extent the U.S. experience in the Vietnam War and the lessons learned from it, a phenomenon known as the "Vietnam Syndrome," influenced the decision by the United States not to intervene during the early stages of the Balkan conflict.

The study will argue that the Vietnam War was used as a historical analogy for the current situation in former Yugoslavia. I further argue that this method was an improperly used historical parallel and should not have been applied.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
A. PURPOSE.....	3
B. HISTORICAL CONTEXT.....	3
1. What Actually Was Yugoslavia?.....	4
C. THE THIRD BALKAN WAR.....	9
1. Slovenia Fights.....	11
2. Croatian War.....	12
3. Bosnia-Herzegovina Tragedy.....	14
D. RESPONSIBILITY AND OPORTUNITY TO LEAD.....	18
E. QUESTION.....	24
F. STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY.....	25
G. RESEARCH DESIGN.....	26
II. A DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF THE VIETNAM SYNDROME.....	27
A. INTRODUCTION.....	27
B. THE PRICE OF WAR.....	28
C. THE IMPACT OF THE VIETNAM WAR.....	30
D. THE AMERICAN PEOPLE.....	31

E. THE MILITARY.....	33
F. THE GOVERNMENT.....	39
G. CONCLUSION.....	49

III. THE BALKAN QUAGMIRE MYTH: HOW THE SERBS FOUGHT THE WAR.....	51
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A. INTRODUCTION.....	51
B. SIEGE OF VUKOVAR AND DUBROVNIK.....	53
C. SERB ARMY.....	55
1. Structure.....	55
2. Equipment.....	57
3. Logistic.....	57
D. SUMMARY.....	58

IV. IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS.....	63
A. WHAT WAS THE QUESTION.....	63
B. USING THE LESSONS OF THE PAST.....	63
C. LESSONS OF THE VIETNAM WAR.....	64
D. CHALLENGES THE U.S. FORCES WOULD HAVE ENCOUNTERED.....	66

E. FOUR BIG MISTAKES.....	66
F. LESSONS FOR THE WORLD.....	68
APPENDIX A.....	73
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	81
INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST.....	85

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For decades the legacy of the quagmire in Vietnam bred self-reproach, mistrust, and doubt of the efficacy of American military power among the American public and military, and government leaders. Fear of another Vietnam has shaped every American decision to use force abroad since 1975. This phenomenon is commonly referred to as the "Vietnam Syndrome."

This thesis traces the development of the Vietnam Syndrome and elaborates on the impact of the Vietnam War on American public, political, and military culture.

The paper will argue that the U.S. experience in Vietnam influenced the decision not to intervene in the Balkan conflict, that the Vietnam War was used as a historical analogy to the current situation in former Yugoslavia, and that this method was an improperly used historical parallel.

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I. INTRODUCTION

We did not believe that it could happen. No one thought it was possible. It seemed to be completely unthinkable. We thought that such horrors were alien to the heritage of modern European sensibility, especially at the end of the second millennium. How wrong we were. Overnight one of "the riders of the Apocalypse"¹ rode into our lives—war, Croatia was at war!

Day after day the eyes of Croatian citizens were turned towards the open sea waiting and hoping for the U.S. armed forces to arrive and stop this madness. Yet, evening after evening Croats went to bed with the thought: "Tomorrow they will come ." Nobody came, not the next day, not the next week, not the next year. Not at all.

To intervene or not to intervene was the question the U.S. was struggling with. Some toxin called the "Vietnam Syndrome" had snuck into the brains of American political and military leaders and kept them from coming to the rescue of the desperate Croats.

In 1990, the Croatian people, in free and democratic elections for the first time in their history, voted overwhelmingly for independence. The following year, the newly elected democratic government chose to secede from the predominately communist, renamed socialist, regime of President Slobodan Milosevic. In June 1991, President Bush's Secretary of State, James Baker, made a highly publicized

¹ "The four riders of the Apocalypse" are: plague, war, famine, and death. In The Holy Bible, Revelation 6:3, it is written: "When the Lamb opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, 'Come!' Then another horse came out, a fiery red one. Its rider was given power to take peace from the earth and to make men slay each other. To him was given a large sword."

visit to Belgrade, the Yugoslav capital, and threw his weight behind preserving the crumbling state.²

The NATO Supreme Commander, John Galvin, told Belgrade's Politika that NATO would not intervene in any Yugoslav civil war. To round off the incentives to military action, the U.S. Secretary of State, James Baker III, insisted that 'the United States continues to recognize and support the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia.'³

Although, U.S. approval to invade the seceding republics was never given, Baker's message urging that Yugoslavia hold itself together was read by Milosevic and the Serb-dominated army as a green light to use force to prevent Croatia and Slovenia from seceding.

In the appeasement analogy promoted by columnists and editorial writers of influential newspapers and magazines in the United States and Western countries, Milosevic was portrayed as Hitler and James Baker as Neville Chamberlain, replaying the Western acceptance of Germany's swallowing of Czechoslovakia in 1938.⁴ And indeed,

As it was, the Serbs learned another lesson-that there was no Western resolve and that they could push about as far as their power could take them.⁵

Several days after Baker's meeting with Serb leader Slobodan Milosevic, Serbia and the "Yugoslav People's Army" started the aggression.

² Frank Wright, "Blunt Talk on Balkans: Ex-Ambassador Condemns U.S. Policy that He Says Allowed War to Be Inevitable," Star Tribune, April 2, 1995, p. A19.

³ Mark Almond, Europe's Backyard War: The War in the Balkans, London: Mandarin, 1994, p. 48-9.

⁴ David Binder, "Criticized as Appeaser, Vance Defends His Role in Balkans," The New York Times, January 19, 1993, p. A1.

⁵ Wright, "Blunt Talk on Balkans," p. A19.

A. PURPOSE

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate to what extent the U.S. experience in Vietnam, the lessons learned from it, which are described in the U.S. as the "Vietnam Syndrome," influenced the decision not to intervene in the Balkan conflict. The paper will argue that the Vietnam War was used as a historical analogy to the current situation in former Yugoslavia and that this method was an improperly used historical parallel.

Why is it that Americans, the leaders of world democracy, needed so much time and find it so difficult to prevent or to intervene and stop the Balkan tragedy? To find the answer to this question, I had to come to the United States. During my military education at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, I realized how complex and difficult the decision to send troops overseas is.

Although this thesis does not focus on the origins of the complex war, it is necessary to bring up important events in Yugoslav history. This history must be analyzed for its significance in shaping American attitudes and reactions towards the events between 1991 and 1995. The following data provides a brief account of Yugoslav history as it relates to the current situation.

B. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

As recognized independent, democratic states, Croatia and Slovenia were attacked by a nationalist aggressor who tried to seize their territories and expel or exterminate their people. For decades, the Western world fought the Cold

War precisely to abolish this type of belligerent behavior. Milosevic and his desires for a Great Serbia⁶ were obviously the driving force behind this war, not "ethnic tensions" or "ancient hatreds" between Croats, Muslims, and Serbs. However, many government officials, including President Bush, used this argument to justify non-intervention.⁷

1. What actually was Yugoslavia?

More than seventy years ago, President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points forcefully enunciated the principle of self-determination but the right to self-determination, as stated in Wilson's Fourteen Points has never been realized in this artificially created country. At the Versailles Peace Conference, in June 1919, Wilson insisted on the creation of a Yugoslav state from the remnants of the Austro-Hungarian (Croatia and Slovenia) and Ottoman (Serbia and Montenegro) empires.⁸ World War II created the first opportunity for a unified Yugoslav state. The idea of Yugoslav statehood among Croatian, Slovenian, and Serbian leaders "had little to do with real internal harmony."⁹ Liberation from

⁶ For over a century and a half the Greater Serbian policy of conquest has been devised, constructed, and carried out on the Balkan territory. Since the 1850s the ruling Serbian oligarchy has been the core and the driving power of this policy of subjugation, the master-mind for preparing and organizing violence. The roots of the Great Serbia are well documented in Ivo Banac's article, "Post-Communism as Post-Yugoslavism: The Yugoslav Non-Revolutions of 1989-1990," pp. 141-59, chapter in Daedalus: Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Cambridge, MA: 1990. See also Boze Covic, ed., The Roots of Serbian Aggression: Debates, Documents, Cartographic Reviews, Zagreb: Centar za Strane Jezike, 1993.

⁷ U.S. Department of State Dispatch, August 10, 1992, v. 3, p. 617. President Bush's remarks at news conference, Colorado Springs, Colorado, August 6, 1992.

⁸ Christopher Cviic, Remaking the Balkans, New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1991, pp. 5-7. Ali Rabia and Lawrence Lifschultz, eds., Why Bosnia?: Writings on the Balkan War, Stony Creek, Connecticut: The Pamphleteer's Press, 1993, pp. 140-1. John Zametica, The Yugoslav Conflict, London: The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1992, pp. 6-8.

⁹ Ivo Lederer, "Nationalism and the Yugoslavs," chapter in Peter F. Sugar and Ivo J. Lederer, eds., Nationalism in Eastern Europe, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994, p. 433.

foreign rule and the dream of independence were the main motivations to form a sovereign state. From the very beginning the new state faced the problem of integrating diverse peoples with different religions, customs, and cultures into a single administrative entity.

The course of subsequent political life was rendered inexorable by the first Yugoslav constitution, the Vidovdan Constitution of 1921, which created a centralized unitary system – as opposed to Croatian federative schemes – and gave Beograd and the Serbs effective control of the state apparatus and national finances.¹⁰

It must be stated that until the creation of Yugoslavia, there was no history of Serbo-Croat wars. In fact, the Croats and the Habsburg Serbs had a record of cooperation in fighting joint enemies.¹¹

The experiment of Yugoslavia as a country effectively ended in 1928 when Stjepan Radic, the leader of the Croat Peasant Party, was shot on the floor of the National Assembly in Belgrade. During the years 1929 through 1941, the collapse of the nation was prevented only by the use of the Serbian-dominated army.¹² In 1938, of 165 generals in the armed forces, 161 were Serbs, leaving only two Croats and two Slovenes.¹³ The country collapsed in 1941, and was partitioned among Germany, Italy, Hungary, and Bulgaria.

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 435.

¹¹ Zametica, The Yugoslav Conflict, p. 6. The Croats and the Serbs fought together, for example, in the 1848 revolution against the Hungarians. See also Lederer, "Nationalism and the Yugoslavs," p. 416-18.

¹² In fact, the Yugoslav Army (YA) was not a new army of the newly composed country Yugoslavia, but a continuation of the Royal Serbian Army (RSA): uniforms, procedures, and the language of command were the same as they had been in the RSA. Moreover, between the two world wars, only Serbian generals served as Defense Ministers. In 1938, only 10 percent of the YA officers corps were Croats. Ivo Banac, National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984, pp. 150-3.

¹³ James Gow, Legitimacy and the Military, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992, p. 115.

With the end of World War II, the postwar communist phase either suppressed or mismanaged the national question. The Communists tried to resuscitate the ideology of a supranational Yugoslav identity. They forgot that

...they did not win the war under the banner of Yugoslav unitarism; they won under the banner of the national liberation of Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Macedonia, and so on.¹⁴

This "ideology of Yugoslavism" provoked tremendous opposition among the Communists of Slovenia and Croatia who saw this as an opening for the revival of Serbian hegemony. This conflict came to a peak in the early 1960s, and by the 1970s, sections of the Communist Party itself had become exponents of specific national interests. This meant the end of its effective unity and the beginning of a crisis that led to the downfall of the second Yugoslav state. During this period, the United States had an interest in maintaining the status quo in Yugoslavia; united Yugoslavia was a part of the Cold War system.¹⁵

U.S.-Yugoslav relations commenced with the Cominform's denunciation of Yugoslavia in June 1948. The U.S. government quickly understood the importance of the break in the Communist world. President Harry S. Truman seized the opportunity and provided Yugoslavia with desperately needed economic and military help. The regime survived thanks to this generous aid.

¹⁴ From an interview with Ivo Banac, professor of history and Master of Pierson College, Yale University: cited in Ali Rabia, "Separating History from Myth," chapter in Ali Rabia and Lawrence Lifschultz, eds., Why Bosnia?: Writings on the Balkan War, p. 141.

¹⁵ Rabia Ali and Lawrence Lifschultz, eds., Why Bosnia?: Writings on the Balkan War, pp. 143-4, Susan L. Woodward, Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Dissolution After the Cold War, Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1995, pp. 25, 45-6, Paul S. Shoup, Problems of Balkan Security: Southeastern Europe in the 1990s, Washington, DC: The Wilson Center Press, 1990, pp. 36-9.

In exchange, socialist Yugoslavia did not become a member of the Warsaw Pact and

...played a critical role for U.S. global leadership during the cold war: as a propaganda tool in its anti-Communist and anti-Soviet campaign and as an integral element of NATO's policy in the eastern Mediterranean.¹⁶

However, with the end of the Cold War, the Soviet threat had diminished and U.S.-Yugoslav relations were no longer seen as vital to U.S. interests, which led to a strategic downgrading of Yugoslavia in East-West relations. But the recent conflict has clearly demonstrated that "the Balkans continued to matter in a variety of ways to Europe and the rest of the world."¹⁷ For Robert Dole, Senator from Kansas, it was the right time to state that

...the United States urgently needs to review its policy toward Yugoslavia to determine the best means for encouraging the growth of democracy and restoration of full human and individual rights for all of the people in Yugoslavia...We cannot forget that these nations did not join today's Yugoslavia voluntarily.¹⁸

In order to come to a decision, an honest and fair judgment of the situation was needed. It seemed impossible; the Belgrade lobby in the U.S. government was too strong, and supporters of the Serbs in high political positions had already developed private business connections in Serbia. Deputy Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger was Ambassador to Yugoslavia in 1977-

¹⁶ Woodward, Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Dissolution After the Cold War, p. 25.

¹⁷ Cviic, Remaking the Balkans, p. 3.

¹⁸ U.S. Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, "Civil Strife in Yugoslavia: The United States Response," Hearing Before the Subcommittee on European Affairs, 102nd Cong., 1st sess., February 21, 1991, Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1991, p. 37. For full transcript see Appendix A.

81, and the director of the National Security Council, Brent Scowcroft, was Assistant Air Attaché at the U.S. Embassy in Belgrade in 1959-61, and wrote his doctoral dissertation on the country. "'Lawrence of Serbia' as his less flattering juniors at the State Department called him was a key figure in the day-to-day policy-making of the U.S. response to Yugoslavia's deaths throes."¹⁹ If anything

...Eagleburger and Scowcroft were inclined to keep some distance from the Yugoslav imbroglio because questions about their private business ventures with Yugoslavia—conducted in the period between their diplomatic careers and their return to governmental service—had already threatened public embarrassment over possible conflicts of interest.²⁰

U.S. Representative Helen Delich Bentley of Maryland had some strong feelings on this subject. After stating that both of her parents came from Serbia, she went on to distort Yugoslav history before the U.S. Senate by proclaiming a well known war criminal, General Draza Mihailovic, leader of the Serb Chetniks in World War II, as a hero. She also asked to put in the record two prepared statements; one was from a retired Lieutenant Colonel of the U.S. Air Force, Nikola J. Dragash, and another of Mr. Veljko Miljus. Both of them are Serbian Americans.²¹

Unfortunately, in the coming years, U.S. policy continued to be geared toward helping Yugoslavia maintain its independence and territorial integrity.

¹⁹ Almond, *Europe's Backyard War: The War in the Balkans*, p. 39.

²⁰ Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Dissolution After the Cold War*, p. 155.

²¹ U.S. Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, "Civil Strife in Yugoslavia: The United States Response," *Hearing Before the Subcommittee on European Affairs, 102nd Cong., 1st sess., February 21, 1991*, pp. 48-67.

The Soviet Union played a part in the "maintain the federation" attitude towards Yugoslavia.

Anti-interventionists constantly used the argument that the world was filled with other Yugoslavias to justify the West's failure to intervene on its doorstep...It was the specter of Soviet collapse and then continuing fission within the post-Soviet republics which haunted the imaginations of Western statesmen.²²

The West saw a parallel with the Soviet Union, and there was a fear that if something was done in Yugoslavia, it would have to be repeated in the Soviet Union. This the West did not want to do.

C. THE THIRD BALKAN WAR

By 1990, the signs of Yugoslavia's imminent break-up became clear when the first fully democratic elections in over forty years were held. Croatia and Slovenia, against the will of the West, used the republic's right to self-determination, a right recognized by the Yugoslav constitution. This was not a vote for complete secession, but clearly demonstrated Croatian and Slovenian desires to distance themselves from the central government and the communist-led republic of Serbia. The turning point for the dissatisfaction of these republics came in May 1986, when Slobodan Milosevic became the head of the Serbian Communist Party. Milosevic's takeover came on the wings of a growing cult of personality, media manipulation, and a campaign to brutalize the Albanians in Kosovo. His innovation was in turning the Serbian Communist Party into the

²² Almond, *Europe's Backyard War: The War in the Balkans*, p. 340-1.

party of Serbian nationalism. Milosevic reawakened the old Serbian nationalist myths and dreams of establishing a Great Serbia. He took the final step in March 1989, when he virtually abolished the autonomy of Kosovo and Vojvodina. Milosevic first tried to seize control of the Yugoslav central institutions to dominate all Yugoslavia. When this plan failed he turned to his "Plan B" — to create a Greater Serbia carved out of Croatia and Bosnia. Croatia and Slovenia favored a loose confederation and voted for administrative independence and democracy. Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic showed his real face and publicly warned that any attempts toward independence would prompt aggressive action from Serbia in regard to protecting Serb minorities. He used the history of the Ustasha Army from WWII to create fear among Serb population.

The renewal and evocation of wartime passions was made necessary by the political crisis of communism in Yugoslavia and the search for a new basis of legitimacy for power — especially by the leaders of the Serbian Communists, whose seat was in the federal capital, Belgrade.²³

Slovenia and especially Croatia became targets of a vicious campaign, designed to portray its leaders as latter-day Ustasha.²⁴ However,

...the Serbian political opposition shares Milosevic's view, whereby the western borders of Serbia ought to be drawn slightly east of Zagreb and Rijeka, making much of present-day Croatia a part of

²³ Ibid, p. 7.

²⁴ In this connection it should be noted that the extent and real strength of Croat chauvinism during World War II can not as yet be fully assessed. Communist portrayals of the Ustasha movement and their leader Dr. Ante Pavelic are nonsense. Now, after Communistic regime, a comprehensive research can be undertaken with regard to the "losers" of World War II in the Balkan lands.

emerging Great Serbia. **These ambitions...are behind the current Serb demands for political autonomy in Croatia.**²⁵

On August 17, 1990, thousands of armed radical Serbs in Knin, backed by the military might of the Yugoslav People's Army (YPA), sealed off towns and blocked roads in Croatia in order to create a separate state of "Republica Srpska Krajina." The best indication that the war had little to do with the protection of ethnic Serbs in other republics was provided by the fact that Serbian aggression started first in Slovenia, the republic with the most homogenous ethnic characteristics.²⁶

1. Slovenia Fights

Until the war broke out we could think about various options, even about whether some Yugoslav idea would succeed. But when war came it was clear to me that it was the end of it all.

Vasil Tupurkovski,
Macedonia's representative
on the federal Presidency in 1991.²⁷

On June 27, 1991, YPA tanks criss-crossed Slovenia aimed at exerting maximum pressure on the Slovenia's leaders and persuading them to back down. But it achieved the very opposite, and Slovene forces engaged them in combat. This intervention provoked non-Serbs in the military and Slovenes in the YPA, shortly thereafter, to resign en masse, to be followed rapidly by their Croat colleagues. The weakness of the remaining Yugoslav army, now

²⁵ Banac, "Post-Communism as Post-Yugoslavism," p. 182. (emphasis added)

²⁶ Out of the total of 1,881,864 inhabitants in Slovenia, 90.5% were Slovenes, and 1.4% Serbs. Covic, Roots of Serbian Aggression, Historical Map, No. IX.

²⁷ Christopher Bennett, Yugoslavia's Bloody Collapse: Causes, Course, and Consequences, New York: New York University Press, 1995, p. 156.

consisting of only Serbs and Montenegrins, was very obvious during this short war. An army once thought of as invincible was defeated within ten days by untrained and under-equipped Slovenians. In total, eight Slovene and 39 YPA troops died, and 111 Slovene and 163 YPA troops were wounded, while more than 2,500 YPA conscripts were taken prisoner.²⁸ Many suggest that they decided to wait for the decisive battle in Croatia and Bosnia.

A ten-day war between the YPA and Slovenia ended with the mediation of the European Community, giving the impression that the dissolution of the country was not so difficult after all. However, within two months, war spread to Croatia.

2. Croatian War

The armed hostilities between the Croatian government and Serb rebels that started in Knin in August 1990, had become an open war between Croatia and YPA. The first deaths were recorded on March 31, 1991, while the first atrocity took place in Eastern Slavonia on May 2, 1991. At their own risk, foreign reporters could effectively go wherever they wanted and thus became witnesses to the barbarity of Serb irregulars and the YPA.²⁹ Systematic "ethnic cleansing" by Serbs was reported.

The most celebrated battles were those for Vukovar and Dubrovnik. In August, 1991, Vukovar was encircled by the YPA and pounded mercilessly for 87 days. The defenders surrendered, and those who fell into the hands of Serb

²⁸ Ibid, p. 159.

²⁹ Ibid, p. 163.

irregulars were executed en masse. The YPA assault on Dubrovnik finally put the lie to Serbian claims that the war was about Serb rights in Croatia. Of Dubrovnik's 70,672 inhabitants only 5,735, or 6.7 per cent, were Serbs.³⁰ Though hopelessly out-gunned, Dubrovnik refused to surrender, as the YPA demanded, and appealed to the world for assistance. At this stage, Croatia (and Slovenia) won international recognition from Germany. The YPA made one last, desperate attempt to halt recognition by shooting down two unarmed helicopters of the EC Monitoring Mission above Croatian airspace on January 7, 1992, and attempted to pin blame for the attack onto Croatia.³¹ However, only one helicopter was destroyed and the survivors were able to testify who was responsible for the deaths of five of their colleagues. The shooting proved counter productive and recognition went ahead as scheduled on January 15, 1992. Germany recognized the independence of Slovenia and Croatia, and other members of the European Community followed. The United States refrained from recognizing the new states and continued to blame the independence declarations for the outbreak of the war. Yet three months later, on 6 April, the United States recognized Slovenia and Croatia, and together with the European Community, extended recognition to Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Croatian and Serbian forces in Croatia agreed to the deployment of 14,000 U.N. peacekeepers and as they began arriving in Croatia, another, more destructive conflict was already boiling over into war.

³⁰ Ibid, p. 169.

³¹ Woodward, Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Dissolution After the Cold War, p. 402.

3. Bosnia-Herzegovina Tragedy

The international recognition of Bosnia-Herzegovina technically made the YPA soldiers a foreign occupation force. The YPA began to withdraw from Bosnia on April 27, 1992, but turned over all heavy mortars and up to 54,000 men and officers, fully armed and equipped, to the Bosnian Serbs. Bosnian Serbs aided by the Yugoslav army quickly seized almost two-thirds of Bosnia and began their atrocities. Not since the Nazis' attempt to exterminate Jews and other ethnic groups, has Europe witnessed such a callous disregard for international human rights law and fundamental human decency, as committed by the Serbs. Current estimates suggest that the total number of persons killed in Bosnia alone exceeds 200,000 and that more than 60 per cent of the population has been displaced.

From the very beginning of the Bosnian war, the atrocities were primarily against the Muslim minority but were also directed against the Croats that were settled in Serb claimed areas. This was part of the Serb strategy to achieve an ethnically clean territory at the end of the war.

The Bosnian war began with the shooting in Sarajevo on April 5, 1992...One might also mark the outbreak of hostilities with the April 2 raid by paramilitary units from Serbia on Bijeljina, a town near the Serbian border...The Serb forces took over the town and murdered at least several dozen Muslims. From that day until now, the war has unfolded according to a precise plan: non-Serb territories are encircled and Serbian majority areas are linked with one another. 'Ethnic cleansing' has been an integral part of the

entire plan. As Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Special Rapporteur of the UN Commission on Human Rights and former Prime Minister of Poland, put it: 'Ethnic cleansing' was the objective, and not a consequence, of the war.³²

Rape became instrumentalized to become an effective weapon in "ethnic warfare."

Rape is an instrument of war, a very efficient weapon for demoralization and humiliation...The rapes in Bosnia are not only a standard tactic of war, they are an organized and systematic attempt to cleanse (to move, resettle, exile) the Muslim population from certain territories...The eyewitness accounts and reports state that women are raped everywhere and at all times, and victims are of all ages, from six to eighty.³³

The European Community recently put the number of rape victims at twenty thousand. The Sarajevo State Commission for Investigation of War crimes estimates that fifty thousand women were raped up to October 1992.³⁴ Even if numbers are highly controversial, the mere fact is atrocious.

Europe and the rest of the democratic world simply continued to close their eyes to these crimes. It seemed that for most this was a regrettable event which could be ignored. In July 1995, former U.S. Secretary of State, Lawrence Eagleburger, asserted:

They have been killing each other with a certain amount of glee in that part of the world for some time now...³⁵

³² Stojan Cerovic, "Letter from Serbia: 'Greater Serbia' and Its Discontents," chapter in Rabia Ali and Lawrence Lifschultz, eds., Why Bosnia?: Writings on the Balkan War, pp. 259-267.

³³ Slavenka Drakulic, "Women Hide Behind a Wall of Silence," chapter in Rabia Ali and Lawrence Lifschultz, eds., Why Bosnia?: Writings on the Balkan War, pp.118-120.

³⁴ Ibid, 118.

³⁵ Michael A. Sells, The Bridge Betrayed: Religion and Genocide in Bosnia, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996, p. 124. (emphasis added)

The phrase "in that part of the world" provides to the audience an immediate feeling of an alienation: these people are not our concern because they are something "other," they are something "different." Senator Phil Gramm went further and in his campaign comments, in November 1995, stated that "all of Bosnia [and its four million human lives] was not worth one American soldier."³⁶ Everywhere statesmen and military leaders quoted Bismarck who had said that

...the Balkans were not worth the bones of a single Pomeranian grenadier.³⁷

But they forgot that in fact two world wars were fought in the Balkans and the bones of many grenadiers were buried there. Obviously Bismarck was wrong so Europe and the great powers could not escape the fact that the Balkan was part of Europe.

While Yugoslavia's towns and villages were systematically destroyed, Western governments argued without any sense of urgency, in sterile debate over the options available to them to stop the war. Russia, Great Britain, and France, as well known Serbian allies, backed Serbia and opposed all U.N. decisions.

President Mitterrand showed how his long memory for France's old allies and past enemies had not been dimmed...The French president told German newspaper readers in November 1991, as Vukovar was in its death throes, 'Croatia belonged to the Nazi block, not Serbia.'³⁸

³⁶Ibid, p. 128.

³⁷ Cviic, Remaking the Balkans, p. 88.

³⁸ Almond, Europe's Backyard War: The War in the Balkans, p. xvi.

Throughout six months of fighting, Britain's Foreign Office chose not to send a single diplomat to Zagreb.³⁹ France and Russia were more direct. Their senior diplomats said that their interests were closer to the Serbs and saw Bosnia as a danger of Islamic expansionism.⁴⁰ With this conception, these states were echoing warnings of Radovan Karadzic, leader of the Bosnian Serbs, who in an interview stated:

Serbian war aims had to take account of the risk to Europe of allowing any Muslim state in Bosnia. The biggest concern for us is that any Muslim state can be a stronghold for Muslim terrorism in Europe.⁴¹

It is hard to imagine that on the eve of the 21st century politicians display such attitudes.

Western diplomacy believed that it could be a bit more laid-back about Yugoslavia than it used to be in the extremely competitive atmosphere of the Cold War. To some it seemed a strategic interest of Western Europe and the United States was not engaged there. According to Jacques Poos, the President of the European Council, the chance to intervene as mediators in the Yugoslav crisis was

...the hour of Europe. If one problem can be solved by the Europeans, it is the Yugoslav problem. This is a European country and it is not up to the Americans. It is not up to anyone else.⁴²

³⁹ Bennett, *Yugoslavia's Bloody Collapse: Causes, Course, and Consequences*, p. 174.

⁴⁰ Ali Rabia and Lawrence Lifschultz, "Introduction: In Plain View," chapter in Ali, et. al, eds., *Why Bosnia?: Writings on the Balkan War*, pp. xlvii-xlviii.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, p. xlviii.

⁴² Almond, *Europe's Backyard War: The War in the Balkans*, p. 32. (emphasis added)

The hopes of the democratic forces of Yugoslavia were that the same criteria would be applied as it was to the rest of Eastern Europe: favors and help where free-market and liberalism advance and active disapproval where human-rights offenses were being committed. The question one must now ask is, why President Bush was not referring to Yugoslavia when he said

...the United States should not seek to be the world's policeman...But in the wake of the Cold War, it is the role of the United States to marshal its moral and material rescues to promote a democratic peace. It is our responsibility – it is our opportunity – to lead. There is no one else.⁴³

Rather than talk and debate ideal solutions, it was more sensible to talk of limiting damage and of easing conflicts and tensions inevitable in a country such as was Yugoslavia.

D. RESPONSIBILITY AND OPPORTUNITY TO LEAD

...If the U.S. were to intervene at all, it would be desirable to do so early in the crisis, before hostilities began, and while escalation might still be avoided.

Office of the Secretary of Defense
June 15, 1979⁴⁴

Beginning in 1990, there were several opportunities for the U.S. to intervene in a preventive way in the Yugoslav crisis. The first came on November 28, 1990, when the Central Intelligence Agency issued warnings to the

⁴³ President George Bush, "Address at the West Point Military Academy," United States Military Academy, West Point, NY, January 5, 1993.

⁴⁴ Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, The Generals' War, New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1995, p. 3.

White House and predicted that a violent breakup would occur "most probably in the next 18 months."⁴⁵

The situation is characterized by growing nationalism and separatism and an alarming worsening of ethnic relations, all of which is expressed in violence, a drastic threat to public order, peace, and citizens' safety.⁴⁶

The CIA's detailed report on the Yugoslav crisis was published in The New York Times in August 1990. It is reasonable to conclude that the decision makers received an advance copy long before it was released in The New York Times. However, regardless of the numerous warning signs, the situation in Yugoslavia developed on its tragic course without outside intervention or interest.

When he was president, George Bush wanted Yugoslavia to hold together. He stayed silent when Croatia declared independence in 1991 and when Serbia, the most powerful republic, took over the Yugoslav Army and used it to conquer almost a third of Croatia. On December 25, 1991, Mr. Petar Poljanic, Mayor of Dubrovnik at the time, sent an appeal to President Bush:

**The President of United
States of America
Mr. George Bush**

SOS

Dear Mr. President

We have heard of U.S. warnings to the JNA [the Yugoslav Peoples' Army], announced yesterday. After 25 days of our agony, it was the first light at the end of the tunnel. But our enemies are now on the door of the city. They already bombed and destroyed almost everything we have, and the old city and the surrounding houses are the only thing we have left. They continue to bomb and make

⁴⁵ David Binder, "Yugoslavia Seen Breaking Up Soon," The New York Times, November 28, 1990, p. A1.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

preparations to destroy house by house, to destroy all our cultural and national roots. Dubrovnik will be lost very soon, and only the name will be preserved. **The only possibility is an active movement of the U.S. military forces to follow up the warning of the State Department.** Maybe that the appearance of some 6th fleet ships in the neighborhood of Dubrovnik would be enough, maybe some flights of Phantoms or something like that. Maybe the appearance of the U.S. monitors in Dubrovnik. But they should come with some very fast vehicle. The preserving of Dubrovnik is now a matter of hours. **You are the only person in the world that can save the rest of Dubrovnik as well as 60,000 people that live here as hostages.**

Please help us. Dubrovnik will never forget your kindness.

We look forward and expect a miracle of great the United States.

Sincerely yours

Mayor of Dubrovnik

Petar Poljanic⁴⁷

Despite Croatian appeals, President Bush and his administration stayed inactive and continued their previous policy of non-intervention. President Bush rejected using air strikes against Serbian artillery positions because he was reportedly:

...haunted by the prospect of Vietnam-style escalation, in which failure of a bombing campaign would be followed by calls for the commitment of substantial allied ground forces.⁴⁸

As the president himself stated:

I do not want to see the United States bogged down in any way into some guerrilla warfare in Yugoslavia. We've lived through that once already.⁴⁹

President Bush recognized Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1992, but stayed silent when Serbs continuously shelled and killed civilians in the Bosnian capital,

⁴⁷ Miljenko Foretic, ed., Dubrovnik u Ratu (Dubrovnik in War), Zagreb: Matica Hrvatska, 1993, p. 587. All emphasis added.

⁴⁸ New York Times, August 8, 1992, p. A4.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

Sarajevo. Another opportunity that he could have used to justify stronger actions arose when journalists in the summer of 1992 discovered Serb-run concentration camps and other evidence of war crimes committed by Serbs. Western officials had been holding back news of such camps.⁵⁰ After the revelations of the horrors of the Omarska concentration camp in August 1992, Western leaders came under pressure by the press and public to liberate the killing camps. But diplomatic staffs worked overtime to deny the use of the term "genocide" to apply to these events. Only one year earlier, in his 1991 State of the Union Address, President George Bush stated that the U.S. would

...continue to lead in support of freedom everywhere, not out of arrogance, and not out of altruism, but for the safety and security of our children.⁵¹

This "new world order" which called for new foreign policy doctrines quickly forced the U.S. to reassess its responsibility as the only remaining superpower when conflict arose in the former Yugoslavia. But with an election looming, President Bush's advisers were reluctant to risk the popularity he had achieved during the Gulf War.

When he was a presidential candidate, Bill Clinton called for resolute action to stop the Serb conquest.⁵² In 1992, Clinton proposed the use of NATO air power to save Bosnians from "deliberate and systematic extermination based

⁵⁰ Sells, The Bridge Betrayed: Religion and Genocide in Bosnia, p. 125.

⁵¹ President George Bush's "State of the Union Address," Congressional Records, January 1991.

⁵² George Moffett and Jonathan S. Landay, "A War to Avoid," The Christian Science Monitor, December 7, 1994, p. 1.

on their ethnic origin.”⁵³ But as president, Clinton deferred to General Colin Powell, then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who argued against using force, saying it would embroil the United States in another Vietnam-style war where no vital interests were at stake. According to the account in Elizabeth Drew’s study,⁵⁴ U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher and his aide Tom Donilon were major figures in persuading Clinton to give up his commitment to the “lift and strike” plan to stop the genocide and to turn to a policy of containment. On May 7, 1993, Christopher returned from Europe with the refusal by the NATO powers to stop the killings. In testimony before the U.S. Congress, he referred to “ancient antagonisms” and spoke of the Bosnian catastrophe as a “problem from hell.”⁵⁵

Among the most frustrating aspects of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia was the apparent ineffectiveness of the peacekeeping forces. By focusing the U.N. mission on the supply of humanitarian aid while refusing to stop the campaign of genocide, the Western policy makers showed a false humanitarianism. In late 1994, and again in May-June 1995, hundreds of U.N. troops were taken hostages by the Bosnian Serbs and became an excuse to intervene.⁵⁶ The uselessness of the U.N. peacekeeping forces became clear on

⁵³Sells, *The Bridge Betrayed: Religion and Genocide in Bosnia*, p. 126.

⁵⁴ Elizabeth Drew, *On the Edge: The Clinton Presidency*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994, pp. 157-63.

⁵⁵ Sells, *The Bridge Betrayed: Religion and Genocide in Bosnia*, p. 127.

⁵⁶ Richard H. Ullman, *The World and Yugoslavia's Wars*, New York: Council on Foreign Relations Book, 1996, p. 200.

January 8, 1993, when the French peacekeepers were escorting the Bosnian Deputy Prime Minister Dr. Hakija Turajlic into Sarajevo.

They were stopped at a Serb army check-point. When the Serb soldiers asked the French peace-keepers to open up the armored car-against their orders and with a certain knowledge of what would follow-they complied, then stood aside and watched as a Serb soldier shot the unarmed Dr. Turajlic dead. **When the same French peace-keepers came home to France, they were decorated for heroism.**⁵⁷

The degradation of the peacekeeping role culminated in June 1993. After some peace-keepers were taken hostage and others threatened with being taken hostage, the people in the protected safe areas, Srebrenica and Zepa, who had been forbidden adequate weapons to defend themselves, were turned over to the Serb army for mass killings. After the British diplomats watered down the safe area resolution, Yasushi Akashi, U.N. Envoy of the operation in Bosnia, issued a U.N. report suggesting that Srebrenica be abandoned. It was a clear green light to the Serb army. On June 5, 1995, the Serb army violated the safe area and drove two thousand desperate refugees into the center of town.

The Dutch officers drank a toast with General Mladic and wrote him a document stating the civilians had been treated properly, while Mladic had a pig slaughtered before the Dutch commander's eyes as an example of what happened to his "enemies" and as Mladic was having thousands of Srebrenica residents led away for slaughter. The Dutch soldiers retreated in their armored vehicles, running over and killing a number of desperate residents trying to flee the killings. **When they returned to the Netherlands, they were decorated for heroism.**⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Sells, The Bridge Betrayed: Religion and Genocide in Bosnia, p. 133. (emphasis added)

⁵⁸ Ibid, pp. 207-8. (emphasis added)

For five long years the West, the European Community, the United States, NATO, and the United Nations, could just stand by as a Balkan War went on and kept saying: "We can not intervene!" Finally, after two million refugees and 200,000 dead, the West intervened. In September 1995, NATO used air strikes to break the siege of Sarajevo. Total casualties against "invincible" Serb forces were two French pilots missing. When intervention came, Serbs collapsed right away. On November 1, U.S.-sponsored peace talks opened in Dayton, Ohio, with the presidents of Croatia, Bosnia, and Serbia. On November 21, Balkan leaders agreed on a comprehensive settlement to the 43-month war in Bosnia.

Many U.S. diplomats agreed that the political misuse of diplomacy in the Balkan war would led "to sharp diminution of American influence in the world and to a much more dangerous world."⁵⁹ The distress over U.S. policy in the Balkan war caused the resignation of five State department officials.⁶⁰ Mr. Warren Zimmermann, by far the most senior and influential man of those who quit, was the last U.S. Ambassador to Yugoslavia. In his book, Origins of a Catastrophe, he writes:

The Vietnam Syndrome and the [Colin] Powell doctrine proved to be powerful dampers on action.⁶¹

⁵⁹ George Kenney, "U.S. Foreign Policy Fails the Moral Challenge of Bosnia," The San Diego Union-Tribune, August 29, 1993, p. G1.

⁶⁰ George Kenney, Jon Western, Marshall Harris, Steven Walker, and Warren Zimmermann resigned to protest the inability of the United States and its allies to end the war in Yugoslavia. See Martin Sieff, "Fifth Aide Quits State Over Bosnia," The Washington Times, January 7, 1994, p. A1.

⁶¹ Anthony Lewis, "How It Happened," New York Times, September 16, 1996, p. A17.

E. QUESTION

The question is: does the United States still use the Vietnam War as a historical analogy to justify to project American military power abroad, and whether the U.S. applied the Vietnam Syndrome to Yugoslavia?

I found that the specter of Vietnam, even two decades after the war had ended, kept reappearing in American political debate. This is significant because it has affected U.S. use of force thereafter and allowed wars to go on.⁶² The Vietnam War was used as an example for the decision not to intervene in former Yugoslavia; consequently, it influenced U.S. foreign and security policy once again, in perhaps its greatest challenge since the end of the Cold War.

This thesis will critically examine what the Vietnam Syndrome is, how it developed, how it was applied in former Yugoslavia, and whether it was a proper or improper use of historical analogy.

F. STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

This paper is divided into several sections: 1) a descriptive analysis of the Vietnam Syndrome and the lessons learned from it, 2) a comparison of the military and political dimension of the Vietnam and Yugoslav conflicts, and 3) implications and conclusion.

⁶² Congress voted to prohibit U.S. military involvement in 1976 in Angola, and in 1977 during the Ethiopian-Somalia conflict.

Specifically, Chapter II traces the development of the Vietnam Syndrome and elaborates the impact of the Vietnam War on American public, politic and military itself. In the last part of this chapter one can see that the leaders of other countries, too, evaluate the lessons of the Vietnam War.

Chapter III makes an effort to distinguish the multiethnic character of the Partisans who fought the Germans in the World War II and the Serb militias of today. The chapter shows that the Serb soldiers attacked with massive heavy weaponry against lightly defended villages and retreated when faced with serious military confrontation.

Chapter IV provides implications and conclusions regarding the challenges the U.S. forces would have encountered if they have entered the Balkan conflict earlier. The paper concludes with the lessons which can be drawn from the Yugoslav War.

G. RESEARCH DESIGN

The primary method of extracting information about the U.S. relationship to Vietnam and Croatian Wars was content analysis.⁶³ The research started with major newspapers and periodicals in 1991 and closed with the November 1995 issues. The Lexis-Nexis Library Index was used with the following search words: Yugoslavia, and Vietnam, and U.S., and 1990. This search request resulted in 1,119 references

⁶³ Earl Babbie, The Practice of Social Research, Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1992, p. 63. To find out how theory can be proven in sociological research, Richard H. Wells and J. Steven Picou (1981) conducted a content analysis of a sample of articles.

being included in the analysis.⁶⁴ One of the biggest surprises in this study was the number of articles referencing to the U.S. view of the Vietnam and Yugoslav wars.

The methodology I used for this thesis was the qualitative historical analysis, based on primary and secondary sources. Sources included books, articles, periodicals, and scholarly journals on the history and current events, and the analysis of daily newspapers in the context of Yugoslav conflict.

⁶⁴ While searching for materials which named Yugoslavia and Vietnam, several other trends surfaced. Neither of these types of articles were included in the study.

II. A DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF THE VIETNAM SYNDROME

A. INTRODUCTION

Serious decision making in politics and everyday life often finds us in situations in which we know very little about the probabilities of various possible outcomes. Regarding that, decision makers often resort to analogical thinking. Previous decisions, certainly, "can serve as source analogs, helping them with their impending targets,"⁶⁵ but they are not always the best way to reach an optimal decision. There is the danger that analogies more often can corrupt thought than aid it.

Political and military decisions with enormous human consequences "provide the most dramatic domains in which historical analogy can make a strong contribution to decisions."⁶⁶ But the trouble is that the environment in which history is being made is dynamic. Nations together with their leaders rise and fall, new alliances and international bodies are built, new technologies change the ways in which wars are fought and peace is maintained. For all these reasons, it is "difficult to glean strong generalizations from the historical record and use them to set current policy."⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Keith J. Holyoak and Paul Thagard, Mental Leaps: Analogy in Creative Thought, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1995, p. 140.

⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 155.

⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 155.

This chapter traces the development of the Vietnam Syndrome and elaborates on the impact of the Vietnam War on the American public, political, and military culture. Evidence from this chapter shows that a coherent lesson was constructed from the Vietnam War. It explains the U.S. Armed Forces' reluctance to implement organizational action in the wake of its defeat. This is the Vietnam Syndrome.

For decades, the legacy of the quagmire in Vietnam had bred self-reproach, mistrust, and lingering doubt in the efficacy of American military power. Fear of another Vietnam played in every American decision and this referred to the Vietnam Syndrome.

Learning lessons from the Vietnam War has been a preoccupation of U.S. analysts since the moment the war ended. But the leaders of other nations, too, have certainly gained insights from the Vietnam War. The last part of this chapter focuses specifically on how the Serbs, contemplating a possible military confrontation with the United States, evaluated the lessons of the Vietnam War for their policies toward the United States.

B. THE PRICE OF WAR

The Vietnam War was America's longest war, lasting from 1945 to 1975,⁶⁸ or from 1965 to 1973 if you count only the time American combat troops were involved. In 1965, the regime of South Vietnam was in danger of falling. President Johnson

⁶⁸ The U.S. involvement really began in 1945 at the end of World War II, with President Truman's decision to back France' conquest of its former colony, Vietnam.

and his advisors turned to the Munich analogy to publicly justify his decision to send American combat troops into Vietnam.

Nor would surrender in Viet-Nam bring peace, because we learned from Hitler at Munich that success only feeds the appetite of aggression. The battle would be renewed in one country and then another country, bringing with it perhaps even larger and crueller conflict, as we have learned from the lessons of history.⁶⁹

It was the first war the United States lost, although due to superior power and mobility, the U.S. won every battle. It was the first war brought into the family living room by television. For the soldiers who fought it, it was a new kind of war, a guerrilla war without front lines, against an enemy who often wore civilian clothes. It was probably the most divisive conflict for Americans since the Civil War and perhaps the most misunderstood war in the history of the United States. The Vietnam War left a determination among policy and military leaders not to repeat the mistakes made there, a phenomenon called the Vietnam Syndrome. U.S. leaders now abandoned the Munich analogy for that of Vietnam.

During the Vietnam War years, nearly 9,000,000 Americans served in the four branches of the United States forces. This makes the Vietnam War second in number of personnel involved in one war (only World War II saw more American soldiers involved). Over 300,000 soldiers were wounded, 150,000 of those were classified as seriously wounded and nearly 60,000 lost their lives.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Holyoak and Thagard, Mental Leaps: Analogy in Creative Thought, p. 160.

⁷⁰ John S. Bowman, ed., The Vietnam War: An Almanac, New York: World Almanac Publications, 1985, p. 385.

The Vietnam War effectively ended on January 11, 1973. American participation ended by negotiation and with a Peace Agreement signed by the United States, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, the Army of the Republic of South Vietnam, and the Provisional Revolutionary Government on January 27, 1973, in Paris. But, the war stayed in American minds long after the guns fell silent. Today, the mere sound of the word *Vietnam* brings to one's mind a meaningless miserable war, not a country in Southeast Asia.

C. THE IMPACT OF THE VIETNAM WAR

Besides being a great inspiration for books, movies, television shows and art, this war had a major influence on American political culture. The "Vietnam Syndrome" rapidly became a spiritual disease of all post-war administrations.

This war influenced the people, the military, and the government at the same time. Even, a century and a half earlier, Carl von Clausewitz stated that these three factors are the essential basis for military operations:

War is, therefore, not only chameleon-like in character, because it changes its colour in some degree in each particular case, but it is also...a wonderful trinity...The first of these three phases concerns more the people; the second, more the General and his Army; the third, more the Government...A theory which would leave any one of them out of account, or set up any arbitrary relation between them, would immediately become involved in such a contradiction with the reality, that it might be regarded as destroyed at once by that alone.⁷¹

⁷¹ Carl von Clausewitz, On War, New York: Penguin Books, 1968, p. 121.

D. THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

In a democracy such as America, public support is an essential precondition for the conduct of military operations. Most military engagements occur quickly with little preparation of public opinion. But prolonged engagement of military forces must be the outcome of the national will and must be supported by a majority of the American people and their elected representatives in the Congress.

The term "Vietnam Syndrome" refers in general to the lingering effects of Vietnam on the U.S. national conscience and specifically to the American public's reluctance to support military actions abroad. During the Sixth century B.C., a mysterious Chinese warrior-philosopher, Sun Tzu, said that moral influence, that which causes people to be in harmony with their leaders, is essential to victory in war.⁷² In Vietnam, public confidence in the military eroded due to an inept strategy of attrition, dishonest assessments, and unjust conscription.

The United States had never lost a war in its history. Americans did not lose one single battle in the Vietnam War, and although its military power remained potent, its military authority declined painfully.

After its victories in World War II, the United States military enjoyed a reputation as the best army in the world. The Korean War constituted a sign of American weakness and eroded the U.S. reputation for invincibility. Vietnam

⁷² Sun Tzu, The Art of War, Boston: Shambhala, 1988, p. 43.

caused a loss of confidence in the ability of the United States military to win every war. Once United States troops had been withdrawn from Vietnam, the nation breathed a collective sigh of relief and adopted a "never again" school of thought on the use of American troops to defend non-Communist regimes and to control political changes in Third World countries.

The Vietnam War was a reaffirmation of the exceptional relationship between the American national will and the American Army. The American Army really belongs to the American people, who take a proprietary interest in its involvement. If the American people lose their commitment, it is delusive to try to keep the Army committed. General Fred C. Weyand, who was the last commander of the Military Assistance Command Vietnam and supervised the withdrawal of U.S. military forces in 1973, stated:

In the final analysis, the American Army is not so much an arm of the Executive Branch as it is an arm of the American people. The Army, therefore, cannot be committed lightly.⁷³

The Gulf War of 1991, rebuilt a bridge between the military and the American people. President Bush developed public and Congressional support for his Persian Gulf policy. He used every opportunity to address the nation and to explain America's objectives in the Gulf.⁷⁴ This was never the case during the Vietnam War. In the Gulf War, Bush ensured that the American people

⁷³ Harry G. Summers, Jr., On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War, New York: Dell Books, 1982, p. 33.

⁷⁴ For example, see the statement by President Bush, January 16, 1991: "Our objectives are clear. Saddam Hussein's forces will leave Kuwait. The legitimate government of Kuwait will be restored to its rightful place and Kuwait once again will be free. Iraq will eventually comply with all relevant United Nations resolutions..." Harry G. Summers, Jr., A Critical Analysis of the Gulf War, p. 162.

supported the war and the American military reached the level of authority they had possessed before.⁷⁵

E. THE MILITARY

When President Richard Nixon took office in January 1969 a Pentagon computer was fed all the data on the United States and North Vietnam-size of population, gross national product, steel production, numbers of ships, tanks, aircraft, and the rest. It was then asked, "When will we win?" The answer was instantaneous: "You won in 1964!"⁷⁶

The ghost of the Vietnam Syndrome also bequeathed to the military itself a wound that still seems fresh. This war had been a painful lesson for every aspect of the United States military doctrine. For eight years the American military fought bravely and well on the land, in the air, at the sea. As the University of California at Berkeley's Professor Douglas Pike noted: "It was a record unparalleled in the history of modern warfare." Yet after eight years, the army completed the withdrawal of its forces without having defeated the enemy. It was not evident in 1973 that the U.S. army had lost its first war; it only become clear in 1975, when the South Vietnamese army, which had been trained and equipped for more than two decades, was overrun in a blitz operation by the North Vietnamese Communists.

Although the United States military was well trained and better equipped than their enemy, the army was ill-prepared, both doctrinally and in

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 19. The day after the Gulf war began, 83 percent of Americans supported the war. At war's end, a Washington Post-ABC poll gave President Bush a 90 percent approval rating.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 56.

terms of its force structure, for guerrilla warfare. They oriented their doctrinal development, force structure, and field training toward a high-intensity, nuclear and conventional war. Little theoretical thought was given to develop a doctrine of the fundamental differences between conventional and unconventional conflict. At the same time, the North Vietnamese Communists had proven themselves experts of a form of unconventional war which they called the People's War. Recognizing their inferiority in conventional military power, the North Vietnamese, through the People's War, fought the guerrilla war.⁷⁷ In Vietnam, the failure of the U.S. was at the strategic level.

Americans waged the wrong method of war and, what is more significant, fundamental decisions on Vietnam were being made in Washington. Military leaders allowed civilian "strategists" to run the war and to dictate to the military professionals the strategies for the conduct of war. The opposite was true in the successful Gulf War, where it was made quite clear by President Bush that he had no intention of micro-managing tactical or even operationally strategic actions.⁷⁸ This is a stark contrast to the classic image of President Johnson poring over maps of North Vietnam, selecting each of the targets to be hit. But, without any doubt, the Gulf War was fought in the shadow of the

⁷⁷ The People's War strategy has three phases. In the first phase, the insurgents build their political infrastructure, recruit membership, and conduct selected terrorist acts against regime. The second phase continues all operations initiated in the first phase and is characterized by guerrilla operations against political, economic, and military targets. Phase three occurs when the military balance is better than in the two earlier phases. In this phase the insurgent operations are combined with the operations conducted in the earlier two phases and large formations attack in conventional or quasi-conventional meaning.

⁷⁸ Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, The Generals' War, New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1995, preface.

Vietnam War. The victory in the Persian Gulf War has been traced as a vindication of the U.S. military efforts to reform itself following Vietnam. Unlike Vietnam, there would be no gradual escalation to give the enemy a chance to recover. The Gulf War was a unique situation and an opportunity to apply the doctrine of warfare developed to counter and defeat the enemy on the European continent. Equally important is that

...it was a test of Powell's doctrine of decisive force, of joint warfare, and of Congress's attempt to reform and reorganize the military **to avoid the pitfalls of the Vietnam War**. Once the political objectives were set, this had been the generals' war to win or lose.⁷⁹

However, the Persian Gulf War was an impressive demonstration of American military power but it was an incomplete success. With the emphasis on a quick victory and speedy exit, the generals supported the premature decision to bring the war to a close. They resisted providing any measure of protection for the Kurds and Shiites who had been encouraged to battle Saddam Hussein. An implicit goal of the military campaign

...was contradicted by the impulse to quickly withdraw, disengage, and avoid any military links to the insurgents. The disconnect between the military and political aims resulted in a confusing end.⁸⁰

And, yet, Saddam Hussein is still there.

In many ways, the United States army has recovered from the Vietnam War. Today's soldiers are better equipped and better prepared to fight than the

⁷⁹ Ibid, p. x. (emphasis added)

⁸⁰ Ibid, p. xv.

Vietnam generation was. They are better able to perform the mission as was clearly confirmed during the Persian Gulf War. The fact is that insurgency wars are the prevalent form of conflict in the Third World. Given the growing focus on the Third World as a source of markets and raw materials, it would seem proper for the American army to study revolutionary war, train for it, and allocate significant resources for it.

Ironically, a doctrinal vacuum was a characteristic for the period after the Vietnam War. Harry Summers' 1982 study On Strategy had a big influence on the development of the United States military thought as well as on the formulation of the Weinberger Doctrine. A retired Lieutenant Colonel, Summers, served as a battalion and corps operations officer during the Vietnam War. He was sent to the Army War College to compile the various lessons of the Vietnam War and draw some conclusions.⁸¹ Summers' interpretation of Vietnam soon became the Army's official view and his book gained wide support in the military and academic communities. Unpolished and not quite developed for civilian policy-makers' consumption, Summers' lessons needed a powerful promoter before it could be fully transformed from its original simple analysis to an official policy. Many of Summers' lessons of the Vietnam War find their way for the official use through "Weinberger's six tests." In a November 28, 1984 speech to the National Press Club, Secretary of Defense Caspar W. Weinberger

⁸¹ Stephen J. Mariano, Peacekeepers Attend the Never Again School, Monterey, CA: Master's Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, December, 1995, p. 49.

identified a series of major conditions to be applied when weighing the use of the United States combat forces abroad. Weinberger stated:

...I proposed six "tests" governing my definition of a situation requiring us to commit our forces to "combat." Those six tests, in brief are:

1. Our vital interests must be at stake.
2. The issues involved are so important for the future of the United States and our allies that we are prepared to commit enough forces to win.
3. We have clearly defined political and military objectives, which we must secure.
4. We have sized our forces to achieve our objectives.
5. We have some reasonable assurance of the support of the American people.
6. U.S. forces are committed to combat only as a last resort.⁸²

In this approach, Weinberger presents *the win criteria*. By not allowing the military to use overwhelming force in Vietnam, the American government prevented their forces from winning: this was seen as stab-in-the-back. This new approach allowed military to use overwhelming strength as a guarantee to win every war.

From the military's point of view, the Weinberger doctrine was meant to guarantee that the U.S. would not repeat the strategic mistakes of the Vietnam War. In Vietnam, there was no clear intention of winning despite the sacrifices being made; there was tenuous public and congressional support, and the military and political objectives were never clearly defined. The Vietnam Syndrome was, in essence, the understandable desire on the part of America's

⁸² Caspar W. Weinberger, Fighting for Peace: Seven Critical Years in the Pentagon, New York: Warner Communications Company, 1990, p. 402.

military that their sacrifices not be in vain. As the post-Vietnam military sought to rebuild the strategic ethos, one officer wrote that

...when it comes to being engaged in any undertaking where political objectives are hazy, public support only tepid, the prospects for a rapid decision remote, and the risk of substantial casualties high, service opinion is unanimous: count us out.⁸³

The problem is that this is precisely the kind of mission the U.S. military is likely to face after the end of the Cold War.

It therefore came as no surprise when General Colin Powell, who had been a young infantry officer in Vietnam, fortified the Weinberger doctrine while serving as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Powell weighed in with even more explicit guidance as to how military force should be used in interventions.⁸⁴ In particular, he wished to reinvigorate the strategic link: closely matching military goals to political objectives, as is well known, he favored using overwhelming force to guarantee that objectives would be reached at minimum cost in American lives. This was very much the philosophy in the Gulf War, where Powell stated that his strategy left nothing to chance, and that the U.S. military was "not operating in the margin" and would "win decisively."⁸⁵ In fact he opposed the war.

It was Powell who had argued within the Bush administration and, surprisingly, outside administration councils with allied officials, against even going to war to liberate Kuwait...Powell's concern was

⁸³ A. J. Bacevich, "Military Culture and Institutional Change in Peace Operations," An American Strategy, Washington D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1995, p. 105.

⁸⁴ Colin Powell, "U.S. Forces: Challenges Ahead," Foreign Affairs, Vol. 72, No 5, Winter 1992-1993, pp. 32-45.

⁸⁵ Lawrence Freeman and Efraim Kharsh, The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991, London: Faber & Faber, 1993, p. 207.

that the liberation of Kuwait, noble goal that it was, might not produce the speedy and decisive victory his doctrine required.⁸⁶

During the Yugoslav war, General Powell did not change his position, and with the statement that "we have learned the proper lessons of history,"⁸⁷ he showed his reluctance to use force.

Such behavior on the part of senior leadership, such as Colin Powell and Norman Schwarzkopf, certainly can be explained with the fact that today's commanders were junior officers in Vietnam. More than two decades later they would be the senior officers who led American forces to victory in the Persian Gulf. In the Persian Gulf War, U.S. military strategists were determined to avoid another Vietnam "quagmire." They were preparing for the last war instead of the next. After the Gulf War the commander of U.S. forces, General Norman Schwarzkopf, exclaimed:

I measure everything in my life from Vietnam.⁸⁸

F. THE GOVERNMENT

All the post-Vietnam war administrations have been psychologically influenced by the Vietnam War and Vietnam kept reappearing in the American political debate. The Vietnam Syndrome had institutional and subjective manifestations. Institutionally, it assumed a number of specific issues: the War Powers Resolution, the Weinberger Doctrine, restrictions on the operations by

⁸⁶ Gordon and Trainor, The Generals' War: The Inside Story of the Conflict in the Gulf, p. ix.

⁸⁷ Colin L. Powell, "Why Generals Get Nervous," The New York Times, October 8, 1992, p. A21.

⁸⁸ Kutler, Stanley I., ed, Encyclopedia of the Vietnam War, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1996, p. 557.

the CIA and other intelligence agencies, and the reduction of the Pentagon budget. Congress, following the Vietnam War and further involvement in other countries' conflicts, felt it needed more control over the Executive Branch and the power of the President in actions other than a Declared War. The 1973 War Powers Act prohibits the President from waging war beyond 60 days without Congressional approval.⁸⁹ Authorization can be made in many forms, such as a temporary waiver of the Act or via a Declaration of War. This Act was intended to reassert democratic control over the decision to send U.S. troops on dangerous missions around the world. To this point, Alexander Hamilton had written: "The Legislature can alone declare war, can alone actually transfer the nation from a state of Peace to a state of War."⁹⁰

More serious than these institutional reverses, was the subjective response. "We need a policy to prevent more Vietnams," Richard Nixon said when accepting his 1968 nomination for the President. "No more Vietnams" became the closest statement that the Americans had to a national consensus. President Jimmy Carter, who was elected when the Vietnam Syndrome was at its peak, generally led the non-interventionist policy. This policy prevented direct U.S. involvement in such conflicts as the Zaire in 1976, the Iranian Revolution and the Nicaraguan civil war. Carter's Secretary of State, Cyrus

⁸⁹ The War Powers Resolution, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1975. Public Law 93-148, 93rd Congress, H.J. Res. 542, November 7, 1973. It was Joint Resolution concerning the war powers of Congress and the President, resolved by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled.

⁹⁰ Morton J. Frisch, ed., Selected Writings and Speeches of Alexander Hamilton, Washington: American Enterprise Institute, 1985, p. 403.

Vance, is the best example of the Vietnam Syndrome in power. When the U.S. forces invaded the Iranian desert in an attempt to rescue the United States diplomats who were taken hostages, Vance resigned because of the principle he could not serve a president who would use force. Summarizing the Vietnam period, in 1975 Senator Edward Kennedy declared that "the lesson of Vietnam is that we must throw off the cumbersome mantle of world policeman," and Senator Alan Cranston observed that "the United States should be a peaceful world neighbor instead of a militant world meddler."⁹¹ This view predominated, and in 1976 Congress voted against U.S. military involvement in Angola and in the Ethiopia-Somalia conflict.

The country's disagreement over Vietnam still marked American political life a generation later. During the 1980, 1984, and 1988 presidential campaigns and administrations, Vietnam kept bubbling up. Ronald Reagan viewed the Vietnam War as a "noble cause" that failed because politicians in Washington did not let the military do its job. In his presidential campaign he wanted to revive American pride and self-confidence which he felt was lost in the Vietnam War. In foreign policy, the new President promised to stand with friends and to confront enemies. As America's economic and military strength returned, this nation would again be respected around the world. He argued that first was the need to overcome the so-called Vietnam syndrome, which symbolized defeatism, malaise, and a near isolationist foreign policy. While American

⁹¹ Michael T. Klare, Beyond the "Vietnam Syndrome": U.S. Interventionism in the 1980s, Washington: The Institute for Policy Studies, 1981, p. 3.

policy stood paralyzed, communism was on the march. The record of communist advances after the Vietnam War, during the Ford-Carter years was significant. In 1975, South Vietnam and Laos were conquered by North Vietnam. Angola and Mozambique became Soviet-Cuban puppet states, as did Ethiopia and South Yemen in 1978. In 1979, Cambodia was conquered by North Vietnam, and Afghanistan was occupied by the Soviet army. In this same year, Grenada and Nicaragua became Soviet influenced states. This advance of communism ended in 1980, when Suriname established a Marxist dictatorship. For generations, the United States had been the champion of the status quo, protecting existing governments from subversion or overthrow. Suddenly, for the first time in recent history, American national leaders were talking of making public moral judgments about the nature of the governments they will support and oppose.

Reagan told a veterans' audience that:

...It is time we recognized that ours was, in truth, a noble cause...We will never again ask young men to fight and possibly die in a war our government is afraid to win.⁹²

He blamed the government for the war's failure and opposed normalizing relations with Vietnam.

Vietnam as metaphor become visible during the Kuwait crisis of 1990-1991. Vice President Quayle proclaimed: "Operation Desert Storm will not be

⁹² Quoted in Howell Raines, "Reagan Calls Arms Race Essential to Avoid a 'Surrender' or 'Defeat,'" New York Times, August 19, 1980, pp. A1, D17.

another Vietnam...They will not be asked to fight with one arm tied behind their back."⁹³ Prior to the Gulf War, President George Bush had to struggle with the Vietnam Syndrome while building public support for the United States military involvement. Bush succeeded in getting far-reaching public approval for U.S. intervention in the Middle East and was able to maintain that support throughout the brief war. Bush claimed that the Persian Gulf War victory laid to rest the ghost of Vietnam, the fear of military entanglement inspired in U.S. policymakers and the public.

It's a proud day for Americans and by God, we've licked the Vietnam Syndrome once and for all.⁹⁴

Was President Bush right? I have tried to show that the Gulf War was deeply shaped by Vietnam. The Vietnam Syndrome continued to divide American opinion: There was quite some irony in Bush's proclamation of the death of the syndrome. He left Hussein in and allowed him to rebuild his chemical and arms complex. He hesitated to help the Iraqi Kurds and Shiites. He did not require more vigorous enforcement of U.N. resolutions that Iraq violated at every opportunity, and when the U.N. Security Council decided that a military response was required he took the form of *graduated response*.⁹⁵

Despite repeated threats of broad retaliation by Washington, the air strike against Iraq today was a minimal military action, intended not to produce a decisive military outcome but to send the political signal that Washington and its allies were determined

⁹³ Quoted in Maureen Dowd, "Quayle Aims at Protests, a la Agnew," New York Times, January 24, 1991, p. A13.

⁹⁴ President George W. Bush, March 1, 1991, quoted in Ann Devroy and Guy Gugliotta, "Bush to 'Move Fast' on Mideast Peace," The Washington Post, March 2, 1991, p. A13.

⁹⁵ Italicized by M.Burdelez

to enforce the restrictions imposed on Baghdad at the end of the Gulf War. The raid...had more in common with the philosophy of gradual escalation in the Vietnam war than the day-and-night blitz of the Gulf War...As in Vietnam, the United States struck, ordered a pause in the bombing to evaluate the response, and suggested it would expand the attack if Baghdad did not get the message.⁹⁶

If this is not the Vietnam Syndrome, then it has never existed.

The Kuwait War has devalued the specter of Vietnam, but it did not destroy it. This ghost reappeared with each successive proposal to use military force—to end starvation in Somalia, to restore an elected president in Haiti, to stop Serb atrocities in former Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia was the foreign policy issue over which presidential candidate Clinton had criticized President Bush most sharply. Clinton promised more aggressive action in the former Yugoslavia, but his Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Colin Powell, once more was against intervention. Powell's views on Bosnia had not shifted from the Bush's administration and he laid out the same military conceptions. In his book, My American Journey, he compared the Yugoslav and Vietnam wars:

The harsh reality has been that the Serbs, Muslims, and Croats are committed to fight to the death for what they believe to be their vital interest. They have matched their military actions to their political objectives, just as the North Vietnamese did years earlier. The West has wrung its hands over Bosnia, but has not been able to find its vital interests or matching commitment. No American President could defend to the American people the heavy sacrifice of lives it would cost to resolve this baffling conflict. Nor could a President likely sustain the long-term involvement necessary to keep the protagonists from going at each other's throats all over again at the first opportunity.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ See Michael Gordon, "Hitting Hussein With a Stick, With a Sledgehammer in Reserve," New York Times, January 14, 1993.

⁹⁷ Colin L. Powell, My American Journey, New York: Random House, 1995, pp. 577-8.

The Serbians took from the Gulf War the lesson of the need to avoid war with the United States and other major industrial powers.

Serb propaganda made **great play with 'history' and the Vietnam parallel**. Milosevic and his henchmen saw very clearly that victory in the Gulf War had not lifted the shadow of South-East Asian defeat from the shoulders of the American Gulliver. Far from it. If anything the miraculously bloodless victory over Saddam reinforced the trauma...Their laurels were won cheaply and they feared tarnishing them by risking their good fortune again so soon after liberating Kuwait.⁹⁸

The Serbian camp has been careful that its actions remain below the threshold of provoking unacceptable international pressure, particularly an armed intervention, based in part on its assessment of the Gulf War experience. Belgrade assumed that the threshold for intervention was much higher in the case of Yugoslavia than was true in the Gulf, given the lack of overriding political or material interests (e.g., oil) in the Balkans. At those points in the crisis when international military action seemed more likely, for example September 1991 or Spring 1992, the Serbian camp made apparent concessions to the international community, however tactical in character. This tactic was seeking to seize or regain the initiative by striking at U.S. and coalition centers of political gravity. These centers of gravity are the political system and public opinion of the United States, which are arguably sensitive to casualties, the length of the conflict, and civilian damage. Those who recall General Schwarzkopf's angry reaction against "body count" during the Persian Gulf War will find echoes over twenty years earlier.

⁹⁸ Almond, Europe's Backyard War: The War in the Balkans, p. 254. (emphasis added)

One of the most violent reactions we got was from the body count, particularly from the young combat arms officers recently back from Vietnam.⁹⁹

The American people had no tolerance for foreign operations, humanitarian or otherwise, if it meant that their sons and daughters might be brutalized or killed. The zero-tolerance for the casualties and the obsession with it on the part of the Congress and the media was evident in every American action. In December 1992, U.S. military forces entered Somalia as part of a U.N. forces to deliver food and medicine to desperately hungry people. The operation enjoyed the overwhelming support of the American public. But one year later, on October 5, 1993, a drastically different set of images came to the TV screens--bodies of American soldiers being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu by smiling Somalis. Senators and Representatives said the American people wanted out.

Within 48 hours of the news reports of the deaths, the president addressed the nation: the United States would leave Somalia within six months. Clearly, the announcement was a direct response to the notion that the American people were fed up.¹⁰⁰

The American public is very sensitive to the loss of American lives abroad. The U.S. policy-makers need to worry not only about public support for beginning of a foreign operation, but about the response to American casualties. In that case, it is widely assumed that the American public would strongly demand the withdrawal of the U.S. troops.

⁹⁹ Harry G. Summers, Jr., A Critical Analysis of the Gulf War, p. 55.

¹⁰⁰ Steven Kull, "Misreading the Public Mood," The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, March/April, 1995, p. 56.

These manifestations of the so-called Vietnam syndrome were not dispelled by the success in the Gulf War. Furthermore, U.S. tolerance for the apparent costs of war may have actually declined because of the exceedingly high standards that were set by Operation Desert Storm.

Serbian military analysts learned that lesson and before the YPA intensified the war in Croatia, the military leadership in Belgrade began studying the prospects of the U.S. becoming militarily involved. A part of the analysis was published in the Serbian military journal Vojno Delo.¹⁰¹ In the introduction, Colonel Jovan Canak and other analysts specifically compared the Yugoslav Conflict and the Gulf War. They tried to forecast how to make war in Yugoslavia while avoiding war with the U.S. The YPA leadership drew two conclusions. First, they concluded that the European Community could not engage its military forces without U.S. support, which, because the United States was not significantly involved, was lacking. Second, they assumed that the division in the international community would not reach consensus for military intervention as it was the case in the Gulf War.

One of its primary tactics in this respect was the invocation of the specter of Vietnam, in an attempt to play on the sensibilities of Western political and military elites.¹⁰²

Serbian officials and media made good use of this and have suggested that any international intervention force would become bogged down in

¹⁰¹ James Gow, "One Year of War in Bosnia and Herzegovina," RFE/RL Research Report, Vol. 2, No. 23, June 4, 1993, p. 5.

¹⁰² Ibid, p. 6.

guerrilla warfare. Indeed, Milan Panic, the U.S. businessman who in July 1992 became premier of Yugoslavia, which consisted only of Serbia and Montenegro, told the Associated Press that Western intervention could lead to a second Vietnam.¹⁰³ Panic said in an interview:

We are a sovereign country. If attacked, we would have to defend ourselves. But, I hope that the Americans would not do it.¹⁰⁴

The Serbians encouraged the belief that an international intervention force would not only be bogged down militarily but would be caught in an incomprehensible political maelstrom. They attempted to disguise Belgrade's military role and create the impression of a chaotic, uncontrollable ethnic war.

Among the most zealous Balkanists were the Serb nationalists, who asserted that the Bosnian conflict was part of an age-old pattern of ethnic war, that outsiders could not understand it and should leave the people of Bosnia to solve it for themselves (while keeping in place the arms embargo).¹⁰⁵

Serbia's political strategy has required more effective use of the media than Saddam Hussein exercised in Kuwait. The Serbian military's studies of the Gulf War pointed to the importance of developing good relations with a pool of suitably "informed" journalists. The leader of the Serbs in Bosnia, Radovan Karadzic, accordingly tried to size the media initiative, giving frequent press briefings and interviews, sending letters to the Times in London, as well as allowing reporters access to the military units ostensibly under his control.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ Thom Shanker, "Wider Balkan War Feared," Chicago Tribune, August 11, 1992, p. 1.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Sells, The Bridge Betrayed: Religion and Genocide in Bosnia, p. 127.

¹⁰⁶ The U.N. Commission of Experts examined human rights violations in the Former Republic of Yugoslavia from November 1992 until April 1994, and found that Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic was directly linked to the practice. They find him guilty of grave breaches of the 1949

Karadzic's key message for the Western press played up the image of a maelstrom of ethnic hostilities. The message was clear: international military intervention would be another Vietnam, not another Desert Storm.

G. CONCLUSION

The objective of this chapter was to explore the rise of the Vietnam Syndrome. One can see that the memories of U.S. paralysis and despair in Vietnam remain potent. So long as these memories remain alive, and the public remains skeptical about official explanations for government conduct, the Vietnam Syndrome will continue to discourage military intervention abroad.

Geneva Convention, violations of the laws and customs of war, genocide, and crimes against humanity.

III. THE BALKAN QUAGMIRE MYTH: HOW THE SERBS FOUGHT THE WAR

A. INTRODUCTION

Opponents of military action in the Yugoslav war have variously declared the Serbs to be unbeatable, the terrain too mountainous to be vulnerable, and the Balkan conflict a Vietnam-like quagmire. According to these arguments, the high-tech American and European armies are powerless, it seems, when confronted by a few thousand Serb killers with Kalashnikovs.

A favorite argument supporting Serb invincibility is that Serb forces tied up 16 German divisions in World War II. On April 25, 1993, President Clinton proclaimed that

Hitler sent tens of thousands of soldiers to that area and was never successful in subduing it.¹⁰⁷

The truth is that the Germans destroyed the entire Yugoslav Army and occupied that country in a couple of weeks.

The German invasion of Yugoslavia began on April 6, 1941, and Yugoslavia accepted unconditional surrender on April 17. The Germans captured more than 250,000 prisoners while sustaining only 558 casualties.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ Sells, The Bridge Betrayed: Religion and Genocide in Bosnia, p. 126.

¹⁰⁸ Artur L. Clark, Bosnia: What Every American Should Know, New York: Berkley Books, 1996, p. 154. See also Almond, Europe's Backyard War: The War in the Balkans, p. 133. Almond estimated only 166 German casualties.

Germany's decision to invade Yugoslavia was prompted by the failure of Italy's invasion of Albania and Greece and only task of the German forces was to guard and to secure the routes to Greece and Southern front.

...Yet the Germans' strength in the Balkans was never sufficient to do more than keep open the main lines of communication...The vast Yugoslav hinterland was never occupied at all...¹⁰⁹

Furthermore, the combat units that had so quickly accomplished the invasion of Yugoslavia, were withdrawn for use in the invasion of the Soviet Union. The Germans used as replacements mostly older men and those soldiers who had been wounded on other fronts. They were sent here for recovery and rest.

...the number of Germans involved with the Partisans was negligible and indeed the desperate shortage of German manpower was a grievance of which local commanders constantly complained. On 24 September, 1943, the Commander-in-Chief of the German forces visited Hitler to protest that he was expected to hold down a front of 5,000 kilometers with ten poor-quality divisions...¹¹⁰

German attempts to compensate for manpower shortages by relying on the forces of its allies were of little avail. These forces would engage the Partisans only after German units had broken the principal enemy resistance. It has to be stated that not until the end of the Second World War, after the allies massive aid and air support, did Tito's partisans became a viable force. The final decision of the German High Command to withdraw its armies from the Balkans was imposed not by the Partisans but by mounting pressure from the Eastern

¹⁰⁹ Nora Beloff, Tito's Flawed Legacy: Yugoslavia and the West since 1939, Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1985, p. 94.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, p. 95.

and Western fronts. After World War II, it was Tito who created the legend of the partisan resistance and it became part of the Communist creed, compulsorily dinned into the heads of all Yugoslav children from the age of five, that Yugoslavia, unlike all the rest of Europe, freed itself from Axis occupation by virtue of its own resistance.

The second part of the truth is that, contrary to the perception in the West, it was not only the Serbs who fought the Germans in the World War II.

As we have seen, the Serbs of Serbia had played a minor role in Partisan fighting...¹¹¹

No effort was made to distinguish between the anti-Nazi fighters of World War II, who were a multiethnic and multireligious group, and the Serb militias of today.¹¹² The fact is that the other Yugoslav nationalities made up a large percentage of the anti-fascist resistance movement and fought in their own partisan units. For example, five out of a total of eleven Yugoslav Partisan Army Corps in the 1944 were Croatian.¹¹³

B. SIEGE OF VUKOVAR AND DUBROVNIK

People who argued that U.S. forces might find themselves in the endless involvement in a war and in a extended combat with a "formidable" Yugoslav Army, must have missed the battles of Vukovar and Dubrovnik in 1991. During the siege of Vukovar, fewer than 1,500 unorganized, inexperienced Croatians,

¹¹¹ Ibid, p. 190.

¹¹² Sells, The Bridge Betrayed: Religion and Genocide in Bosnia, p. 125.

¹¹³ Enciklopedija Jugoslavije, Zagreb: Jugoslavenski Leksikografski Zavod, 1967.

equipped with only infantry arms, held off for three months 25,000 Yugoslav troops backed by heavy artillery, hundreds of tanks and MIGs, for three months, until the Croats' ammunition ran out.

The second example is the case of Dubrovnik, where no more than 700 lightly-armed Croatians and 40,000 citizens, including women and children, endured a ten month siege by the Serbs. The operations started on October 1, 1991, in the Konavle region, the narrow strip of land behind Dubrovnik. Having seized control of the Konavle region, the YPA began to besiege the old Adriatic town from land and sea. Ground forces and naval vessels destroyed one house after another, grossly neglecting the blue U.N. flags which were posted all over Dubrovnik. Dubrovnik citizens braved and survived heavy shelling from the Yugoslav army, navy, and air-force, and stopped their intention to occupy the city. Indeed, the Serbs do their best fighting against unarmed women and the elderly.

The role of Serbian heavy artillery and tanks was essentially harassment. The artillery was fired in an indiscriminate way, as a weapon of terror. It was not applied as a military support mechanism to sustain operations. It was used for psychological purposes mainly against civilians in unprotected towns and villages. After heavy shelling by regular troops of the YPA, militia leaders such as Vojislav Seselj and Zeljko Raznjatovic-Arkan, with their paramilitary units, carried out ethnic cleansing and spread terror throughout Croatian and Bosnian territory.

Militia leaders worked to instill an ethos of brutality. Arkan, the leader of the Tiger militia, used his headquarters in the city of Erdut as a training ground. Serb recruits were taught that in fighting the enemy, they had no right to spare children, women, or the aged. Serb military commanders showed reporters and their own troops how to slit a throat by having pigs killed as demonstrations.¹¹⁴

Despite the obvious aggression on the part of the Yugoslav army against cultural and civilian targets in Croatia, the international community still considered the republic part of Yugoslavia and viewed Milosevic's attack as an internal matter.

C. SERB ARMY

1. Structure

Serb forces are structured on the same Soviet model used by Iraqi forces. Both the Iraqis and the Serbs, are heavily dependent on tanks and artillery and do not have much courage for going toe-to-toe with armed adversaries. In many ways, air power could be more effective against the Serbs than it was against the Iraqis or the Vietnamese. First of all, the Iraqis had an entire desert and the Vietnamese had a whole jungle in which to hide tanks and artillery, whereas the Serb heavy weapons and tanks were limited to flat areas near roads in the rocky and mountainous terrain. Secondly, in wintertime Yugoslavia, unlike the Iraqi desert or Vietnamese jungle, numerous fires in troop areas and lots of running tank engines generated heat signatures for air-to-ground missiles. Finally, since

¹¹⁴ Sells, The Bridge Betrayed: Religion and Genocide in Bosnia, p. 75.

the Serbs have demonstrated no taste for equal combat, it was unlikely that the combat would continue. A Marine artillery captain, Scott Buren, who traveled across Bosnia and saw a number of Serb units and positions, concluded that the Serbs were using the same tactics that were used to fight the American Civil War. Buren said:

...it would be a simple matter for U.S. Marines to handle the Serbs by air or on the ground.¹¹⁵

To support this statement, it is necessary to mention the last two operations of the Croatian Army. As Croatia succeeded to equip its military forces and to reach an equal potential to the Serbs, they showed the Serbs' real inability to fight a war. In the early morning hours of May 1, 1995, special Croatian police and government troops initiated "Operation Flash," an attack to liberate occupied Western Slavonia. Government forces gained effective control of most of the area within one day, and a cease-fire was reached on the afternoon of May 3. On August 4, 1995, government forces launched the larger scale "Operation Storm" on the former sectors north and south, and gained effective control of the area within five days. Rebel Serb forces organized a weak counteroffensive and quickly prepared an evacuation of both military and civilian personnel from the area. These two actions in which Croatian forces liberated one third of the country showed the limited ability and "heroism" of the Serb soldier.

¹¹⁵ J. P. Mackley, "The Balkan Quagmire Myth: Taking on the Serbs Would Be More Grenada than Vietnam," The Washington Post, March 7, 1993, p. C3.

2. Equipment

All of the equipment in use by the Serbs was antiquated by any but Third World standards. The Serbs were using low-tech T-33 and T-55 tanks, and their mortars and artillery pieces lacked any kind of sophisticated fire control systems. Their antiaircraft capability was largely artillery of the type the North Vietnamese used 20 years ago. The Serbs had some MIG-29s, but they were flying lower-maintenance MIG-21s and MIG-23s. Yugoslav pilots simply did not fly the training hours they needed to stay prepared. A good example of their bombing inability was the bridge between Bosanski Brod, a town in Bosnia, and Slavonski Brod, the neighboring town in Croatia. Serb MIGs bombed that 150-foot bridge daily for three months, hit it only six times, and failed to make it unusable.

3. Logistics

In Vietnam, supplies could come from anywhere across thousands of miles of borders. By contrast, all of the supplies, every liter of fuel, each piece of munitions, and any food for the Serb troops, had to come across a half dozen bridges spanning either the Danube or the Drina rivers. If the movement of fuel and spare parts across those rivers were stopped, so would the ability of mechanized Serbia to wage war.

D. SUMMARY

Although the war in the former Yugoslavia was by no means predictable, it bore no resemblance to the Vietnam analogy. The West failed to adopt a policy to deter military aggression. Early response also would have decreased the need to use force. Yugoslavia was an obvious example. The cases should be studied now by the van den Broecks, Bushes, Powells, Vances, Owens, and Stoltenbergs of the future, not after the shooting and the massacres have started.

The West not only failed to send a clear warning to Serbia but indirectly even encouraged the use of military force. Croatian writer, Branka Magas, stated this in December 1991, five months before the Bosnian war, and at the same time made a grim prediction of things to come:

To take sides in this war is not merely to take the side of one republic—Croatia—which is the current victim of aggression, or of Kosovo and Slovenia the past victims and Bosnia-Herzegovina which stands next in line.¹¹⁶

Yet President Lyndon Johnson, who was strongly affected by the events of World War II, said that “the appetite of aggression is never satisfied.”¹¹⁷ He expressed the logic behind the Munich analogy as,

If you let a bully come into your front yard one day, the next day he'll be on your porch, and the day after that he'll rape your wife in your own bed.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ Branka Magas, *The Destruction of Yugoslavia*, London: Verso, 1993, p. 359.

¹¹⁷ Stanley I. Kutler, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Vietnam War*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1996, p. 341.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 342.

And indeed, the Serbs continued their aggression in April 1992 by attacking the newly independent and recognized republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The West was less prepared than the Bosnians for the tragedy that was about to occur. As David Gompert, senior director of the Bush administration's National Security staff, noted in 1994:

...the Western powers failed utterly to prepare for the conflict in Bosnia they had every reason to expect...Worse, the opportunity was lost to dispatch to Bosnia a peacekeeping force to discourage violence before it began.¹¹⁹

It should be noted that the international community did not fail to take measures that actually gave the attacking Serbs a crucial advantage. An arms embargo was imposed equally against the aggressor and the victims in September 1991, thus ensuring that the imbalance of power in favor of the better armed Serbs was maintained. At the request of the Belgrade authorities, the U.N. Security Council adopted Resolution 713 which imposed an arms embargo on all of the former republics. The embargo locked in Serbian military superiority over the other former Yugoslav republics. The Serbs had a virtual monopoly of heavy weapons having acquired nearly the entire military assets of the Yugoslav Army, including production facilities.

Milosevic wanted U.N. 713 because a continuing monopoly of heavy guns and armor made it easier for his "federal" army to complete his program of ethnic cleansing.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ David Rieff, "The Lessons of Bosnia: Morality and Power," World Policy Journal, Spring 1995, p. 19.

¹²⁰ Albert Wohlstetter, "Why We're In It-Still," The Wall Street Journal, July 1, 1993.

On December 18, 1992, the General Assembly voted by an overwhelming majority to lift the arms embargo against Bosnia and asked the Security Council to immediately revoke Resolution 713.¹²¹ But, with the objections that lifting the arms embargo would increase violence, Britain, France, and Russia opposed the General Assembly's request. Addressing the Council, the Venezuelan Ambassador to the U.N. Security Council, Diego Arria, responded to the British, Russian, and French objections:

We are told that lifting the arms embargo would increase violence. Already nearly two hundred thousand people have died. More than two million people have been displaced from their homes. Twenty thousand women have been raped. The International Court of Justice and the World Conference on Human Rights have indicated that Bosnia-Herzegovina is a victim of genocide and "ethnic cleansing," among other unspeakable crimes. For this Council, then, what precisely does it mean to say that violence would increase and spread? If an armed people possesses a greater ability to defend themselves, this does not mean that violence would necessarily increase.¹²²

Everybody was ignoring the fact that the Bosnians had never asked for Western ground troops, only for a lifting of the arms embargo and for air support. The debate around intervention had become a way to distract attention from the real issue which was a lifting of the embargo. Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic repeatedly urged Western leaders to either lift the arms embargo or intervene to stop the genocide. In his September 6, 1993 speech to the U.N. Security Council Izetbegovic pleaded:

¹²¹ Rabia Ali and Lawrence Lifschultz, eds., Why Bosnia?: Writings on the Balkan War, p. xxviii.

¹²² *Ibid*, xxix.

Defend us or allow us to defend ourselves. You have no right to deny us both.¹²³

By refusing to allow the Bosnians either to defend themselves or to use power to defend them, these leaders engaged in a form of passive violence, setting the parameters within which the killing could be and was carried out with impunity.

The course of the war in the former Yugoslavia has shown that whenever the defenders owned adequate means to withstand Serb attacks, much bloodshed was prevented. If the United States did not choose to send in ground troops, U.S. fighter pilots could still clear the air over Yugoslavia in less time than it took in Iraq and with far less trouble. But merely enforcing the "no-fly zone" over the Balkans would not have done much to influence the outcome of the war because Serb aircraft have not been a meaningful factor in the ground war. A better plan would have been to declare a "no-artillery zone" throughout Yugoslavia. A "no-artillery zone" ultimatum would quickly cool the hot war. Ninety percent of all casualties in the war were caused by Serb artillery, large, high visibility items and tank main guns, not short-range mortar tubes like the Viet Cong used in the jungle. Any heavy gun discovered firing by electronic surveillance could have been targeted from the air, no matter if it were Serb, Croatian, or Muslim.

¹²³ Sells, The Bridge Betrayed: Religion and Genocide in Bosnia, p. 207.

IV. IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

A. WHAT WAS THE QUESTION

This thesis set out to answer a question to what extent the U.S. experience in Vietnam was the reason that U.S. decision makers used the Vietnam War as a historical analogy in order to not intervene in the Balkan conflict.

B. USING THE LESSONS OF THE PAST

What experience and history teach is this — that people and governments never have learnt anything from history.

Hegel¹²⁴

Before a nation considers employing its military forces abroad, the policymakers and their military leaders should evaluate the current conflict in light of historical experience. Although no two situations are exactly similar, history can teach us important lessons in determining which policies are likely to succeed and which are not.

In selecting historical parallels to the current situation in the Balkans, the U.S. decision makers used the Vietnam War as historical analogy. But when comparing the Balkan conflict with the Vietnam War one can not ignore the following fundamental differences. While Vietnam was a strong dictatorial state created for decades, Yugoslavia was a disintegrating country with a vanishing

¹²⁴ Quoted in Almond, Europe's Backyard War: The War in the Balkans, p. 340.

army. Before the war with the United States, desertion was not even possible in Vietnam. Vietnam's morale was high compared to Yugoslavia which had a disintegrating ideology, an army left without a country, little support for a war, and thousands of deserters.

This thesis traces the evolution of the so-called Vietnam Syndrome and shows that the Vietnam Syndrome continues to affect the United States foreign policy. The prolonged indecisiveness regarding U.S. policy toward the war in former Yugoslavia is illustrative. The end of the Cold War has changed the context in which the United States considers international intervention, yet fears of another protracted involvement abroad with a gloomy objectives remains an underlying concern.

The lessons of the Vietnam War learned from the American perspective were worthy of consideration.

C. LESSONS OF THE VIETNAM WAR

The principal lessons to be learned from American's experience in the Vietnam War include the following:

1. The Americans underestimated their opponents in Vietnam. There was no invasion, only a slow infiltration. The people of that region had a long history of resisting foreign occupation. They were particularly adept at using the jungle terrain to make opponent's attempt to control the region both difficult and costly.

2. The Vietnam War presented a rival with two tough military problems: counterinsurgency and military operations in a jungle terrain. Furthermore, most of the soldiers were very young without combat experience and had little or no training in guerrilla warfare. American public support for the Vietnam conflict eroded throughout the war. U.S. attempts to compensate for manpower shortages by relying on the forces of its allies were of little avail, as these forces would engage the Vietnamese only after American units had broken the principal enemy resistance. American reliance on local collaborators was equally unsuccessful, as these units required extensive American supervision and were of limited combat value and questionable political reliability.
3. Intervention in Vietnam did not express sanction from the United Nations. In the Vietnam War, with an exception of South Korea and Australia, the United States did not have active support from other countries.
4. South Vietnam exemplified "governmental chaos." Having been at war for twenty years, the South Vietnamese had no such energy to fight for their nation. In contrast Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia had strong motivations for their withdrawal from Yugoslavia.

D. CHALLENGES THE U.S. FORCES WOULD HAVE ENCOUNTERED

If the U.S. armed forces would have entered the Balkan conflict they would not have had the problems they had in the Vietnam War. First, unlike during the Vietnam War, they were invited into the country by the Croatian and Bosnian people who for the first time lived in newly independent countries and were willing to fight for their nations. This was a guarantee that support of the population would have been universal without any opposition. Second, the United States, with the exception of Great Britain, France, Greece, and Russia, had active support from other countries who wanted to stop these atrocities in the middle of Europe. Third, unlike South Vietnam, Croatia had a stable, democratically elected government.

E. FOUR BIG MISTAKES

Slovenians, Croats, and later Bosnians seemed to have been abandoned to their fate, victims of the indifference or worse of the world's most eminent statesmen. The Western public has been confused to from the beginning, and the mistakes have gotten bigger. Every one was an excuse for inaction.

The first big mistake was that Yugoslavia must at all costs be preserved. Until the last minute, June 1991, the Western powers backed the moribund federal government. James Baker's last minute warning to the Croats and Slovenians not to break up was taken by the Serbs to mean that America and the European Community would not intervene. Western policy makers had a moral

and legal duty to uphold Article 51 of the U.N. Charter guaranteeing the right of a nation to defend itself, as well as the 1948 Geneva Convention requiring all signatory nations not only to prevent genocide but to punish it. The fictitious entity of Yugoslavia had become a tool of those Serb Communists, led by Slobodan Milosevic, who had staked their political survival on the creation of a Greater Serbia at the expense of the breakaway republics.

After the real war against Croatia began in July, the next big delusion started to circulate in the European chancelleries. This was the claim that recognition of the republics' independence would antagonize the regime in Belgrade and bring down a frightful retribution on the mixed populations of Bosnia-Herzegovina. European leaders were reluctant to grant the legal status of the Croatian government in Zagreb. They let the Serbs carry out ethnic cleansing in large areas of Croatia.

As the horrors visited by the Serbs on the cities of Croatia multiplied, a third error emerged: international recognition need not entail military intervention. Germany increased pressure for recognition because no security arrangements to protect the defenseless had ever been contemplated. A United Nations arms embargo operated in favor of the better prepared aggressors. The strength of Croatian resistance during the sieges of Vukovar, Dubrovnik, and Osijek during autumn 1991 made the false notion that it would be enough to leave the new republics to look after themselves.

Having encouraged only one side in the conflict, the European Community found itself ignored. The stage was set for the fourth big mistake, one which is still believed. Drawing analogies with the Vietnam and guerrilla quagmire, world leaders and politicians argued that the war in Yugoslavia could not be influenced by military intervention. The surgical strikes used against Iraq would, it was suggested, be ineffective against the Serbs, who would also exact a terrible revenge against the non-Serbian Bosnians and Croats in their power. "Critical analysis," said Clausewitz, "is the application of theoretical truths to actual events."¹²⁵ The theoretical truths of the Vietnam War were applied to the actual events of the former Yugoslavia and produced an explanation for failure of the political decision there.

F. LESSONS FOR THE WORLD

The international community has been taught a number of bitter lessons in the former Yugoslavia. The first one is that even if a massive intervention to impose a solution is out of the question, a threat of force used early on could have been useful to prevent the spread of hostilities and to bring the parties to the negotiation table. The possibility that force might be used strengthens the hand of diplomacy. Another lesson is that diplomatic recognition is a very blunt instrument. It promises little leverage over the newly recognized governments, but rather raises false hopes for outside support on their part. It

¹²⁵ Clausewitz, On War, p. 156.

must be conditioned on liberal regimes for minority rights and on uncontested border delineation, and it should be clearly distinguished from a pledge of military support. A third lesson points to the fact that if the United States and its European allies had sunk Serbian gunboats bombarding defenseless Dubrovnik during the summer of 1991, or acted more forcefully when Serbia invaded eastern Croatia, fighting might not have engulfed Bosnia. Had the air-strikes, or a credible threat of strikes, been used to prohibit any genocidal act earlier in the conflict, not only would untold hundred thousands of lives of all nationalities have been saved, but the lives of more than two hundred Western soldiers as well. Had they enforced sanctions approved by the United Nations Security Council, and not allowed them to be flouted, Belgrade would be paying a dearer economic price for its ethnic cleansing. Discontent might have grown in the Serbian capital, fostering an anti-war movement and, possibly altering the outcome of the elections. Perhaps the candidates of peace could have defeated Milosevic, the principal architect of war.

The next important lesson is that the U.N. forces and leaders have to act with perfect impartiality with no views of their own. Was this the case with the forces which were employed in Yugoslavia?¹²⁶ This is an impossible criterion. The first UNPROFOR commander, the Indian General Satish Nambiar, was

¹²⁶ The United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) was originally established under chapter VI of the U.N. Charter to implement the Geneva Agreement between the parties to the war in Croatia. See Richard H. Ullman, The World and Yugoslavia's Wars, New York: Council on Foreign Relations Book, 1996, p. 198-211.

regularly accused by UNHCR officials in 1993 of holding pro-Serb views.¹²⁷ Susan Woodward, the American academic who did political analysis for Yasushi Akashi, Special Representative of the Secretary General for Yugoslavia, was widely viewed even among her colleagues at UNPROFOR as being pro-Serb.¹²⁸ In April 1995, the U.N.'s chief negotiator, Thorvald Stoltenberg, proved when he claimed that all Bosnian Muslims were really Serbs, that the United Nation officials were far from being impartial.¹²⁹ The UNPROFOR commander in 1992, Canadian General Lewis MacKenzie, gave numerous interviews in which he patronized the Bosnians and ignored genocide. After he retired, he was paid \$18,000 a day by Serbnet, a lobby for radical Serb nationalists, to propound his views.¹³⁰ In addition to taking the Serb side, MacKenzie showed willful ignorance as UNPROFOR commander.

The last thing that a peacekeeper wants to know is the history of the region he is going into. It complicates the task of mediation.

Major-General
Lewis Mackenzie¹³¹

The most valuable lesson history can teach is that treating a new illness with the prescription for an outmoded syndrome can be lethal. The Yugoslavian situation called for fresh, innovative initiatives, not old clichés.

Currently almost everyone regards those decisions as mistaken, many find them incredible.¹³² Vietnam keeps unexpectedly reappearing in American

¹²⁷ David Rieff, "The Institution that Saw No Evil," *The New Republic*, February 12, 1996, p. 20.

¹²⁸ Ibid, p. 20.

¹²⁹ Ibid, p. 20, and Sells, *The Bridge Betrayed: Religion and Genocide in Bosnia*, p. 134.

¹³⁰ Sells, *The Bridge Betrayed: Religion and Genocide in Bosnia*, p. 209.

¹³¹ Quoted in Almond, *Europe's Backyard War: The War in the Balkans*, p. 61.

political debate. It is like a ghost in every conflict. Vietnam in Beirut, Vietnam in Angola. Vietnam in Nicaragua, in El Salvador, in Somalia. The same considerations appeared to be influencing the administration's policy toward Yugoslavia: for five years the United States refused to contemplate using military force to deter or suppress Serbia's aggressive "ethnic cleansing" policies against all other nationalities in breakaway Yugoslavia.

To some it meant, "Stay out," to the others it said, "Fight this one to win." Thus, for all the rhetoric about a "new world order" that seeks to be on the side of those fighting the Husseins and the Milosevics, the administration's fear of getting into another Vietnam in the hills of the Balkans has proven more decisive. From time to time politicians have proclaimed that Americans finally put the Vietnam War behind which in the Balkan conflict after five years and in spite of all mistakes actually happened. But new conflicts have always proven them wrong. Vietnam still hovers over every crisis.

It seems as if a single Vietnam analogy dominated the decision making of a generation of leaders, who apply it dissolutely and uncritically to whatever crises arise. In any case, there is reason to heed the warning of the historian who wrote:

Though there is certainly a great deal of truth that 'those who do not remember the past are condemned to relive it,' one might also

¹³² George Moffett and Jonathan S. Landay, "A War to Avoid," The Christian Science Monitor, December 7, 1994, p. 1. For example, Marshall Harris, one of the several State Department officials who resigned to protest U.S. policy in the former Yugoslavia said: "It's been a tragedy of a hundred errors."

be cautioned that those who do not forget the past can be led to misapply it.¹³³

¹³³ K.J. Holyoak and P. Thagard, Mental Leaps: Analogy in Creative Thought, p. 157.

APPENDIX A.

The war in the country once known as Yugoslavia raged for nearly five years before the leaders of the Western powers acknowledged what had long been apparent to any newspaper reader or television viewer: that the U.N. presence under the limited rules of engagement and peacekeeping (there where the peace did not exist) had the effect only of prolonging the violence rather than damping it.

It should be pointed out that there were realistic opinions and political ideas among U.S. policy makers regarding the review of American policy toward Yugoslavia, long before the Yugoslav War broke out. Because of their importance, in this paper I felt it necessary to include the abbreviated versions of the statements of several highly respected U.S. Senators and Representatives before the United States Congress.

CIVIL STRIFE IN YUGOSLAVIA: THE UNITED STATES RESPONSE¹³⁴

In the beginning of 1991, six months before the war in Yugoslavia began, Senator Robert Dole warned the U.S. Senate for the necessity to intervene in Yugoslavia and to prevent war.

¹³⁴ U.S. Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, "Civil Strife in Yugoslavia: The United States Response," Hearing Before the Subcommittee on European Affairs, 102nd Cong., 1st sess., February 21, 1991, Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1991. All emphasis added.

Statement of Honorable Robert Dole, U.S. Senator from Kansas:

Senator Dole: Mr. Chairman, I think this hearing does address a very important policy issue for the United States. In my view, **the United States urgently needs to review its policy toward Yugoslavia** to determine the best means for encouraging the growth of democracy and restoration of full human and individual rights for all of the people in Yugoslavia...Negotiations between the republics and the federal presidency on the future of Yugoslavia have to date not yielded any results. I think that is because the divisions we see in Yugoslavia today are not only ethnic, but political as well, and these political divisions are very deep.

While many people think of the current problems in Yugoslavia purely as outgrowths of historical ethnic squabbling, I would argue that such a view is overly simplistic...**We cannot forget that these nations did not join today's Yugoslavia voluntarily...**I understand that the administration's policy with respect to Yugoslavia promotes unity, and I can see that we do not want the United States to be a force for disunity. But we need to recognize that there cannot be unity in a future Yugoslavia unless it is democratic and unless it represents the will of the people in all of the republics. It would not be in our interest to have Yugoslavia divided within, but united by military force.

Traveling from Zagreb to Belgrade to Pristina was like traveling through a time warp, from a fledgling democracy back to the 1950's style communism.¹³⁵ Our delegation in one afternoon got a real taste of what life in Kosovo must be like. The Serbian police authorities did not bother to clean up their act for our visit. From the windows of our bus, we could see tear gas and clubs being used against Albanians who turned out to see us, to wave to us, and to chant "U.S.A., U.S.A."...So, the facts are clear. The issue is what can we do and what should we do about it. Needless to say, we must keep up diplomatic pressure on the Yugoslav central government and on the government of the Republic of Serbia...**But the United States must do more than just react diplomatically.** We need to provide direct aid to the non Communist republics in Yugoslavia thereby bypassing the central government and the Government of the Republic of Serbia. We do not want to reward either government for its policies of coercion and repression...

But as I see it, this is a very historic opportunity to spread democracy and make democracy permanent...So, it seems to me it **is now time for the United States, our Government, the**

¹³⁵ Mr. Dole led a Senate delegation to Yugoslavia in July 1990.

administration, the Congress to get off the sidelines. We cannot be spectators, and we ought to come down on the side of democracy and human rights and freedom, the same thing all of us speak about and talk about from time to time. I think it is very important to Yugoslavia. I would like to see the day in Yugoslavia where people can live in peace, notwithstanding the deep ethnic divisions that have been around for a long, long time, and I believe it is possible that we can lay to rest some of the very serious problems that now exist between the different republics.

So, Mr. Chairman, I appreciate very much this opportunity to testify, and I thank the committee.¹³⁶

SANCTIONS LEGISLATION RELATING TO THE YUGOSLAV

CIVIL WAR, S. 1793¹³⁷

In October, 1991, Senators D'Amato and Dole urged again before the U.S. Senate for the strong policy step toward Yugoslavia and Serbia.

Statement of Honorable Alfonse M. D'Amato, U.S. Senator from New York:

Mr. D'Amato: The situation in Yugoslavia has deteriorated into civil war. With thousands of Croats and Slovenians dead and hundreds of thousands displaced as a result from the fighting, it is my belief that **the United States must become involved immediately.** As the world's lone superpower, it is inexcusable that we stand on the sidelines while innocent civilians die and war rages throughout Yugoslavia. While I supported the European Communities lead role in the crisis at the outset, it is obvious that their efforts have brought few results...It is my firm belief that the United States is the only nation that can send a strong enough message to Slobodan Milosevic and his military...The United States has a long history of supporting the forces of freedom against those of repression. I believe this is a clear example of a repressive

¹³⁶ U.S. Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, "Civil Strife in Yugoslavia: The United States Response," Hearing Before the Subcommittee on European Affairs, 102nd Cong., 1st sess., February 21, 1991, pp. 36-42. All emphasis added.

¹³⁷ U.S. Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, "Sanctions Legislation Relating to the Yugoslav Civil War," S. 1793, 102nd Cong., 1st sess., October 16, 1991, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1992. All emphasis added.

regime which has undertaken a power grab at the expense of innocent lives and, potentially, the stability of Europe...The need for the United States to send a strong message to the leadership in Yugoslavia is at its apex...It is clear that the present policy of quiet diplomatic negotiation has produced minimal results, it is time to send a powerful message of U.S. opposition.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.¹³⁸

Statement of Honorable Robert Dole, U.S. Senator from Kansas:

Mr. Dole: Mr. Chairman, members of the committee...Time is of the essence...In my view, **we have already waited too long...**The fact is, Serbian President Milosevic is responsible for the tragic situation in Kosova and for orchestrating the war against Croatia. The State Department and the European Community have clearly indicated that he is indeed working with and supporting not only the Serbian guerrillas in Croatia, but the Yugoslav army, as well...

Mr. Chairman, I am very concerned that if we do nothing, we will inevitably bear part of the responsibility if **the war against innocent civilians escalates in Croatia and spreads to other republics, such as Bosnia...**You may recall that when I testified before your committee earlier this year, I warned that Milosevic's policies of aggression would spread beyond Kosova-that **these policies were part of a bigger plan.** However, some, including the administration, claimed I was crying wolf, that it was only a matter of time before Milosevic and Communism were swept away in Yugoslavia...Milosevic's first targets were Kosova and Vojvodina, then Slovenia, then Croatia. **Bosnia will probably be next...**

Milosevic and his allies in the Yugoslav army must be stopped. And they can be stopped if the United States steps forward to assume leadership in this crisis which threatens peace and stability in Central Europe. The United States needs to isolate Milosevic, the way we isolated Saddam, and continue to isolate Fidel. **We must move beyond words to action.**

Mr. Chairman, I hope that the committee will give fast and favorable consideration to this legislation. **Lives are at stake, democracy is at stake, and, freedom is at stake.**¹³⁹

¹³⁸ Ibid, p. 2.

¹³⁹ Ibid, pp. 3-4.

DEVELOPMENTS IN YUGOSLAVIA AND EUROPE-AUGUST 1992¹⁴⁰

A year later, the war in Croatia was going on, and a more homicidal war in Bosnia started. The U.S. did not change its politics. On August 4, 1992, Mr. Thomas M.T. Niles, Assistant Secretary of State for European and Canadian Affairs, held a hearing before the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives. After Mr. Niles made short comment on developments in Bosnia and the rest of the former Yugoslavia, the Members proceeded for questioning.

Mr. Hamilton: Why not use force for much broader purposes in Yugoslavia?

Mr. Niles: Well, I think that reflects, among other things the fact that in the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina, you are essentially dealing with a civil war that has been incited by efforts by the Serbs to create their own republic...Under the circumstances I think the military authorities, not only those of the United States but Western military authorities in general, see some very serious problems in intervening more broadly in that conflict.

Mr. Hamilton: What are those problems?

Mr. Niles: Well, problems of defining what your objectives are, defining what the front is, defining what you want to accomplish aside from obviously stopping the conflict.

Mr. Hamilton: Are we afraid of getting bogged down?

Mr. Niles: Well, that prospect certainly has been raised. Some of the historical experiences of other armies that have been involved in Bosnia-Herzegovina do not suggest that this is a place in which one would want to get involved. **I think that historical experience certainly is on the minds of military authorities, not only in the United States but among our Western European allies.**¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰ U.S. Congress, Committee on Foreign Affairs, "Developments in Yugoslavia and Europe-August 1992," Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East, 102nd Cong., 2nd sess., August 4, 1992, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1993.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid*, p. 8.

In his testimony, Mr. Niles clearly drew historical analogies of the Second World War and the Vietnam War. Members Mr. Lantos and Mr. Kostmayer continued discussion and insisted to the explanation for reluctance to intervene. Here are some points from their discussions.

Mr. Lantos: ...And now let us get to the real issues. **Munich and appeasement keeps reverberating in my mind.** The only difference between what we have today and what we had a half a century ago is that now everything is on television in real time globally. So the old excuse that we do not know...we could say not very honestly. But by God, Mr. Niles, there is plenty of confirmation. All you have to do is flip on your television set. **...and months after months after months we get this diplomatic garbage saying caution and reluctance, and no proof...**

Well, let me tell you what the problem is. The problem is that there is an election in 90 days, and this election paralyzes the administration...Those little children do not have 90 days. Every day will be additional little orphans killed and men tortured, and we will continue to say that we are consulting with our allies.

Neville Chamberlain said that what is happening in Czechoslovakia is in a far away land of which we know little. Is that what Jim Baker and you are saying today? That this is a far away land of which we do not know very much? Because every 10-year-old child knows a great deal about this. All he has to do is flip on the television, and see that bus with 50 orphans come under fire and then see the 2 little bodies bloodied and dead in a corner...

The notion that it is a complex issue is really not an excuse. The artillery emplacements surrounding Sarajevo are not that difficult to find. Our surveillance can find infinitely smaller items on the face of this planet than artillery positions...The question, Mr. Secretary, has been for a long time is do we join in the European failure, or do we take a position of leadership?...Everybody is watching what is happening, and the other dictators or would be dictators are learning these lessons. Milosevic is still in power. He is not a Hitler because he does not have an army to conquer Europe.

What are we afraid of? What is Europe afraid of? What is the United Nations afraid of?

This drama is unfolding on a world stage, and what we get is diplomatic double talk. You cannot confirm a single atrocity. That is what you told our chairman 5 minutes ago.

Is that really what you are saying, Mr. Secretary?...

Mr. Kostmayer: ...Unless we do something, it's going to continue. And I am here to tell you that unless we do something, it's going to get worse. Mark my words, and mark the day I said it. Unless something changes, unless something is done by us or by the U.N., sir, this situation will continue for weeks or for months...

You have given a green light to dictators around the world. You are sending a message loud and clear that the United States will not stand in the way of people who do this. It's just what happened before World War II. Mr. Lantos is absolutely right. It's a well drawn analogy. It could not be any simpler.

Mr. Niles: Well, I'm sorry, I don't accept any of that. I'm sorry. There is no basis for that analogy.

Mr. Lantos: Mr. Niles, in this paper to the Senate subcommittee you say, "From the beginning of the crisis, we have identified the Serbian Government of President Milosevic and its allies as the primary culprits." ...Now, in view of this, is the State Department ready to call for having Milosevic stand before an international tribunal for crimes against humanity?...

Mr. Niles: This is a legal issue, Congressman...

Mr. Kostmayer: Do you think he is?

Mr. Niles: It doesn't make any difference what I think he is or not.

Mr. Kostmayer: Well do you? What do you mean it doesn't make any difference? It makes a difference whether the United States of America thinks that this man is a war criminal. Of course it makes a difference. That's the point.¹⁴²

I will conclude this overview with the Levin/Lugar letter to President George Bush which was signed by 29 Senators and sent on January 8, 1993.

Dear Mr. President.

Actions taken by the United States and the international community have failed to stop the aggression and territorial expansion of Serbia. The genocidal policy of ethnic cleansing, constitutes a crime against humanity that continues to take innocent lives and produce thousands of refugees.

The credibility of the United Nations and international law have already been seriously undermined by the failure of the

¹⁴² Ibid, pp. 12-53.

community of nations to take stronger actions or even to enforce previously adopted resolutions of the United Nations Security Council.

We urge you to take a leadership role in formally requesting the United Nations Security Council to enforce the no-fly zone over Bosnia and to do so even if other members of the Security Council threaten to veto such actions.

Sincerely, [followed by 29 names].¹⁴³

This letter was sent to the President in January, 1993, 20 months after the Serb aggression on Slovenia and Croatia, and 10 months after the Serb attack on Bosnia.

Only I can say is to repeat my fellow-combatant words sentenced during the war: "There is no other explanation: even the American President must be Serb!"

¹⁴³ U.S. Senate, Committee on Armed Services, "Joint Chiefs of Staff Briefing on Current Military Operations in Somalia, Iraq, and Yugoslavia," 103rd Cong., 1st sess., January 29, 1993, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1993, pp. 106-7.

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